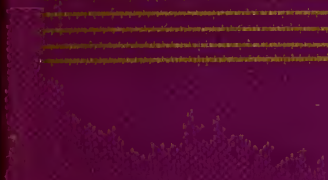


BLIND

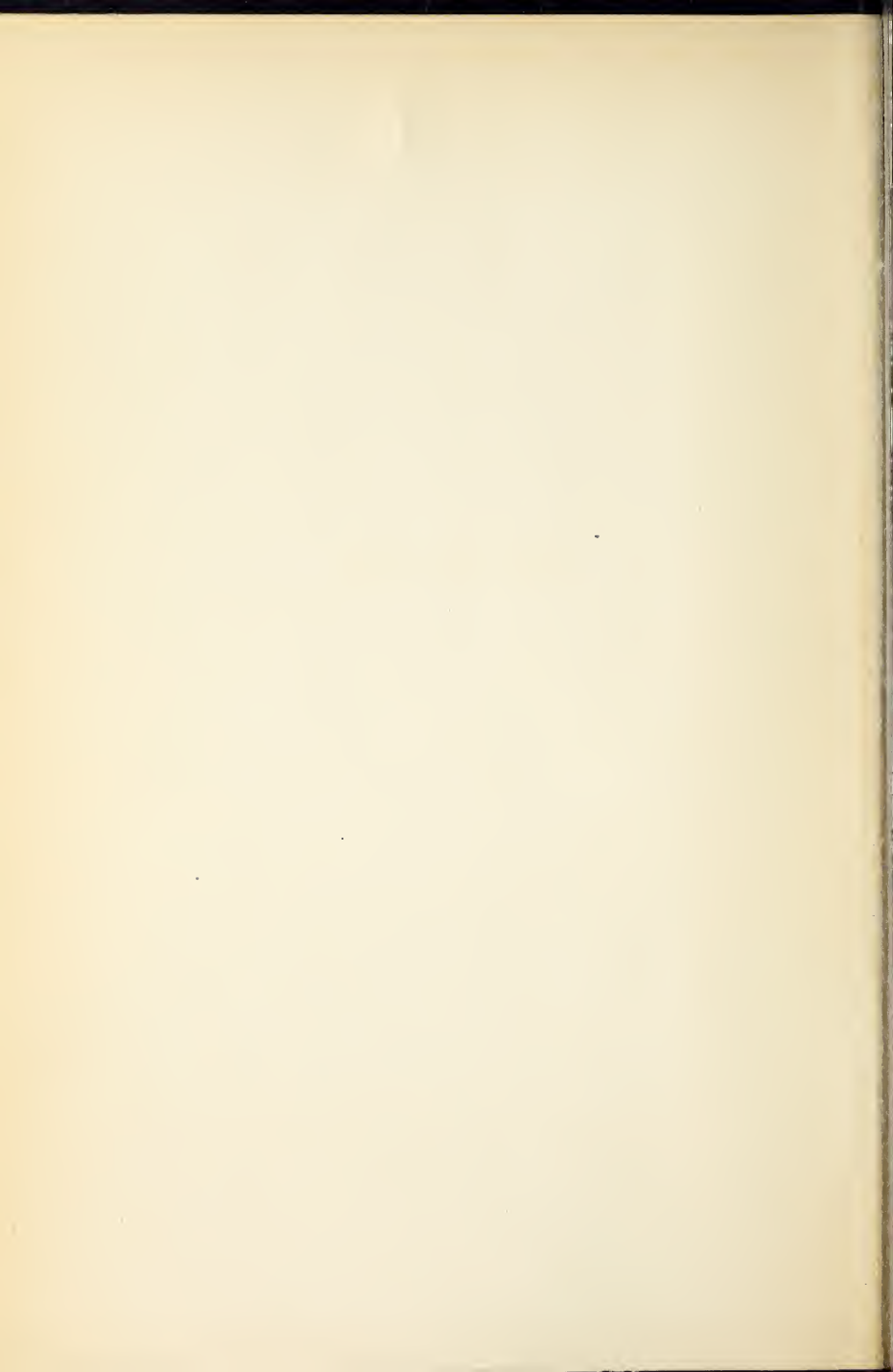
THE STORY OF THE WORLD TRAGEDY
AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF
WILLIAM H. McMASTERS



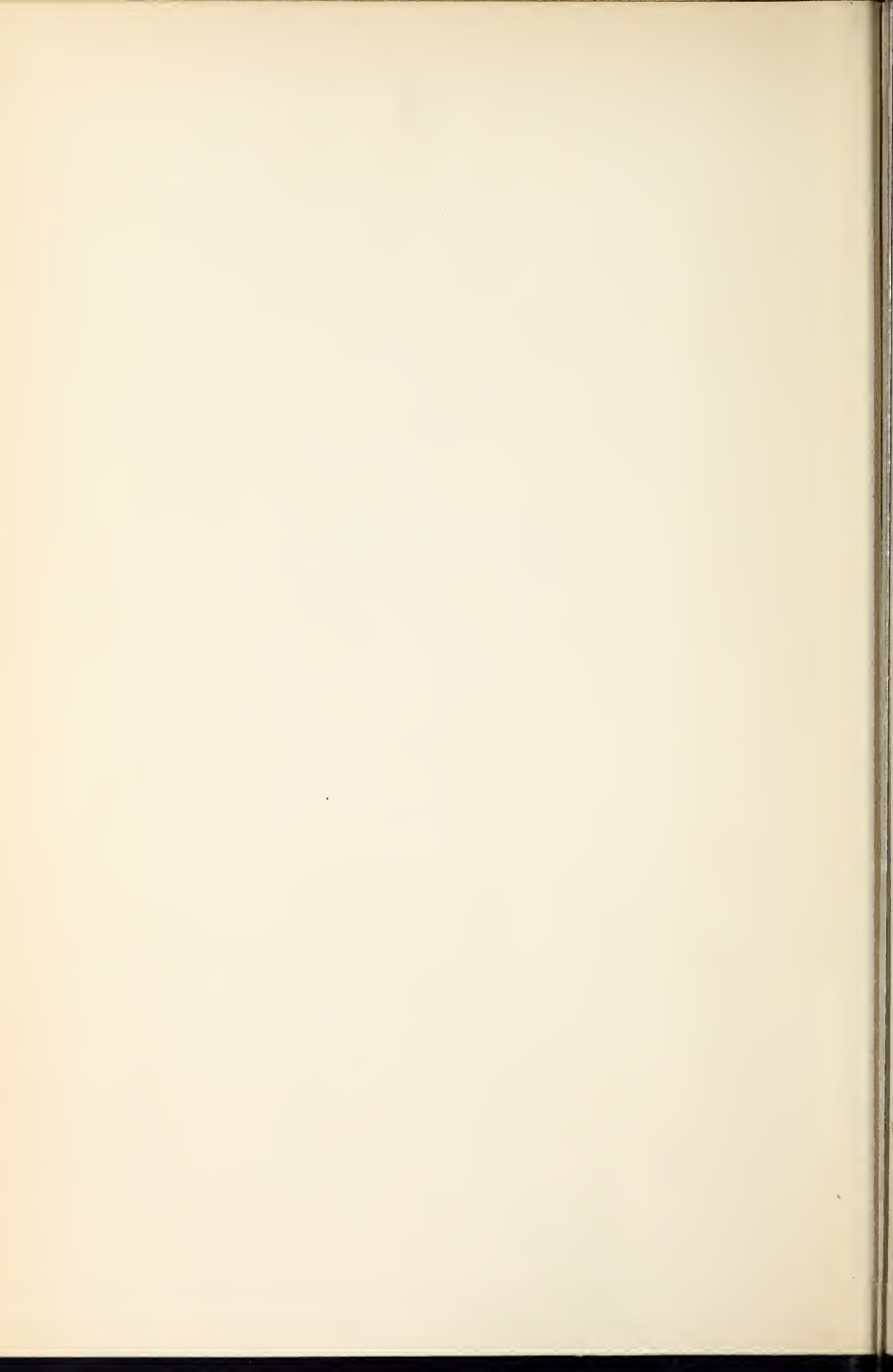


AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.

C. 1



BLIND



BLIND

THE STORY *of the* WORLD TRAGEDY

by DAVID GLENN MACKENZIE

As seen through the eyes of

WILLIAM H. McMASTERS



THE STRATFORD COMPANY, *Publishers*

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

COPYRIGHT — 1934 — BY
THE STRATFORD COMPANY

Publishers

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

HV 2345

M

copy 1



PRINTED BY
THE ALPINE PRESS, INC., BOSTON, MASS.

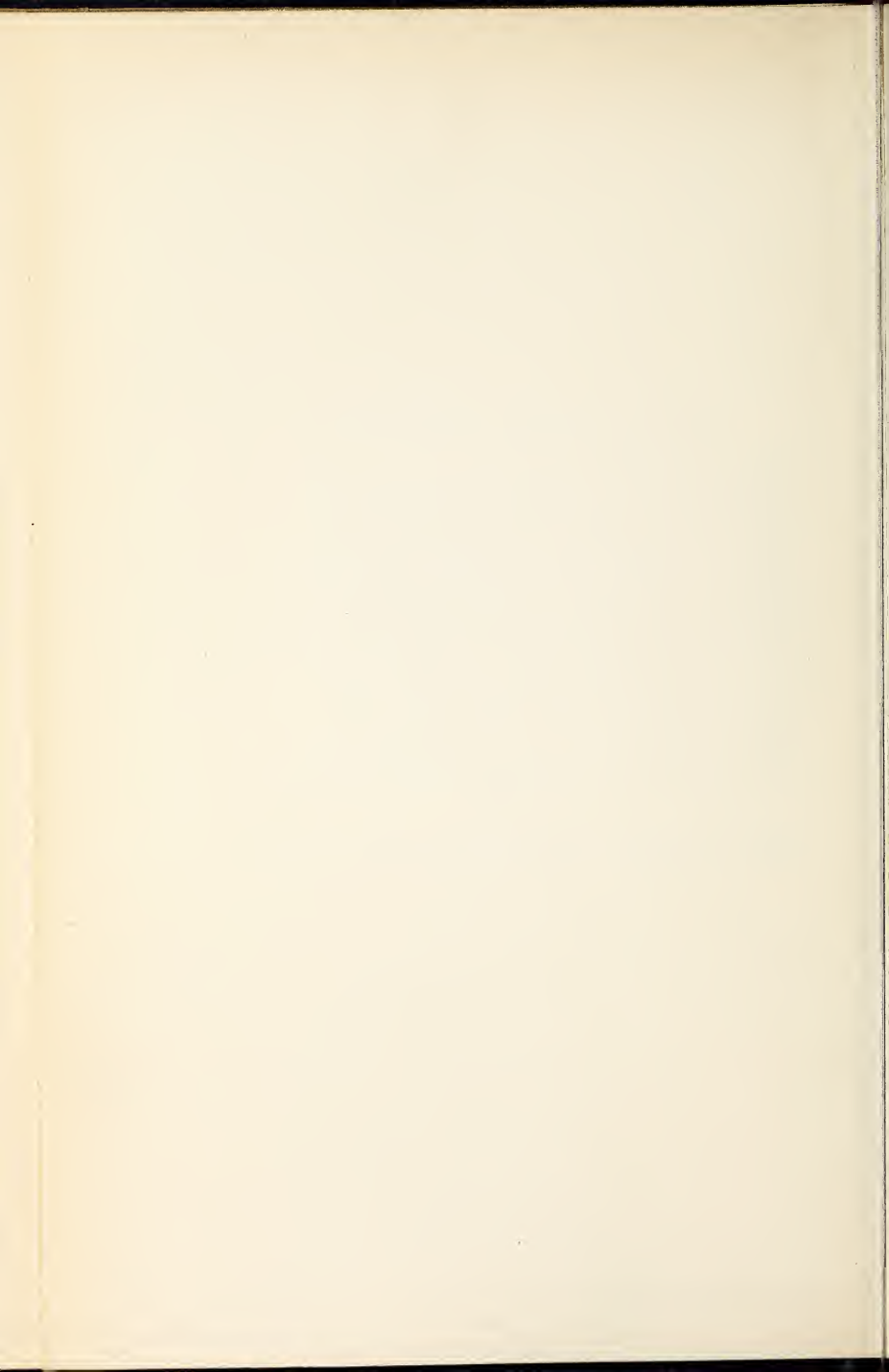
*T*O MY WIFE, HELEN, SINGER OF
BEAUTIFUL SONGS, I DEDICATE
THIS STORY OF THE WORLD
TRAGEDY THAT BROUGHT
US TOGETHER



LOVE'S COSMIC RHYTHM

There's rhythm in my joyful heart today,
A lilting wave of music's measured beat,
That lifts me high and shows the secret way
To places where free kindred spirits meet.
There's rhythm in my singing soul today,
Effulgent flow from time's unnumbered years,
That brings me peace from distant shores away,
And turns aside all idle, earth-born fears.
There's rhythm in my eager life today,
Full surging tide of cosmos' pulsing sea,
That keeps despair and evil thoughts at bay,
And sweeps me on, through God's eternity.

Impelled by metric tones, deep-welled and true,
There's rhythm in my vibrant love for you.



A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

IN writing this history of the world tragedy of 1950 and the reclamation and reorganization problems that developed from it, I feel that I am doing a service to posterity. For fear that my reasons might be misunderstood and the entire results that I hoped to achieve nullified through criticism I have left the entire work in trust until 2050 with instructions for publication during that year.

Histories are generally colored by the environment of the historian. A history written centuries after the events have taken place is sure to be more or less inaccurate. A history written out of actual personal experience is certainly an ideal history in many ways. While it may lack the element of completeness, it supplies an element of drama through personal contact that is totally lacking in the work of research historians.

Regardless of its faults, I offer this story of the greatest tragedy that ever befell humanity as a true and intimate picture of the events. Whatever personal observations I have made are offered in a spirit of philosophic friendliness to the generations which must follow.

DAVID GLENN MACKENZIE.

*New York City,
June, 1955.*



Contents

I. The First Hour—	I
II. The Horror Grows	10
III. The Night Passes	22
IV. The Tenth Day	34
V. Fever and Sickness	44
VI. A New Horror	55
VII. When Sight Returned	64
VIII. With Eyes That Could See	73
IX. The First Day of Sight	86
X. First News From Outside	99
XI. A Strange Honeymoon	116
XII. Five Days After Sight Returned	125
XIII. The People Make Their Choice	135
XIV. A Month After Sight Returned	143
XV. The National Convention	153
XVI. An Exchange of Views	168
XVII. Two Months After Sight Returned	177
XVIII. The World Progresses Slowly	197
XIX. The United States of the World	206
XX. Let There Be Light!	211



BLIND

CHAPTER I

The First Hour—

IT came without the slightest warning. . . . Astronomers had estimated that the head of Gosnold's comet would not come within ten million miles of the earth. With this assurance, the early fears expressed by some of the scare-head writers in some of the daily papers had been forgotten and most people went about their business. The visible tail of the comet did not appear to be over three million miles in length and it was assumed that the attraction of the sun would keep the tail at all times farther from the earth than the head of the comet. That the astronomers were wrong has been definitely settled and we now know that at precisely 12:05 noon, Eastern standard time, on Tuesday, August 1, 1950, the earth entered the gaseous tail of Gosnold's comet and the entire earth had passed through it about three minutes later, the speed of the comet being added to that of the earth in making the transit so quickly.

BLIND

I had been looking at the works of a new American painter that had just been hung in the Metropolitan Museum, and was going down the main steps for the purpose of taking an Avenue bus. My sight left me without the slightest warning. No clouding of the sun preceded it. I went blind just as though someone had suddenly clapped his hands over my eyes. I recall that I stumbled and fell. Getting to my feet, and trying vainly to see, I heard shouts from various sides. A wild shriek from a young boy, near me, sent a chill down my spine. I began groping and came into contact with someone's hand. As I touched the hand it made a frantic grasp for my arm and then two hands grasped me. A woman's voice spoke.

"My God! I'm blind, I can't see!"

"Neither can I," I answered, trying to be reassuring. My brain was in a whirl, but I was thinking clearly through it all.

The hands that now held me closed into a tighter grasp.

"What has happened?" asked the voice, and even in the tense excitement of the moment I noticed that it was a refined voice suggesting musical tones.

I pressed one of my hands upon hers. The day was frightfully warm and neither of us was wear-

THE FIRST HOUR —

ing gloves. As the palm of my hand touched the back of hers, I felt a tremor, as though she must be shaking in terror.

"I don't know what has happened," I answered, "but we will soon know."

Hardly had I uttered the words when the noise of a crash came from the Avenue. A bedlam of wild shrieks followed. This was followed by another noise and the sound of falling glass. Then more shrieks and cries of terror. The din continued unabated. I placed my arms around my companion. The noises and the shrieks increased in intensity. From afar off came a sound of an explosion, its echo reverberating into the distance. My companion clung closer to me.

"I'm afraid!" she whispered.

"Stand perfectly still!" I answered.

Suddenly I felt my leg gripped by someone who was evidently crawling on the pavement. A man was moaning.

"Lift me up! For God's sake, lift me up. I'm blind. My leg is broken."

"Hold tightly!" I said to my companion, and leaned over to assist this new one to his feet. Then came a clanging of a bus bell and I jumped back to avoid it just in time. A heavy bus, evidently out of the control of the driver, hurtled past us, and

BLIND

met the great stone and iron fence that fringes the approach to the Museum with a deadening crash.

My companion was now moaning. I heard the terrified cries of men, women and children with a sensation that bordered on faintness. Helpless, impotent to do anything to relieve the distress, I stood, holding my fainting companion in my arms waiting for the next terror. I have never tried to put into words the thoughts that swept through my mind. Incoherent flashes, wild imaginings, dream-like spasms at best. The one dominant thought that kept recurring was "Am I dead?" and then another thought, "Is this the end of the world?"

With a determination that I have never been able to explain, I clung to my companion and cautiously started to make my way back to the steps of the Museum. I know that I had the idea in mind that if I could only gain the broad steps that I might be able to rest for a moment, without danger of being run down by an automobile or struck by a falling plane.

Although there was no way of computing the actual passage of time, I estimated that fully five minutes had elapsed when my foot came into contact with the lowest steps. The cries of terror had never stopped. The rumble of crashes on the

THE FIRST HOUR —

Avenue had ceased, however, and a death-like stillness seemed to be creeping on. The almost unbearable heat, the groans, the blackness that only total blindness insures and the awfulness of the new monster of stillness at noonday, all joined to make one feel as though death was just around the corner.

Aiding my companion to mount the steps with me, we soon found ourselves in a secluded corner at the front of the Museum. We sat down, but I noted that she clung tenaciously to my arm.

"Let us wait for a while," I suggested, "maybe something will turn up that explains it."

"You don't think it was an earthquake?" she asked.

"No, all I recall before I touched your hand is that I went blind without warning, and stumbled on the steps."

"What would cause us to go blind without any warning and without pain?" she asked, and I was pleased to notice that she had recovered from her nervousness. Her voice was as strong, now, as my own.

"It must have been something from outside," was the only suggestion I could offer. "Something has been taken from the atmosphere that makes it impossible for the optic nerve to react properly."

BLIND

I must admit that I was talking more for the sake of keeping up a semblance of discussion, rather than because I was giving the subject any serious thought but as every reader knows I had accidentally hit upon the very trouble that scientific men later worked out to their own satisfaction. The gases of the comet's tail had consumed the elemental gas since designated as "opticum" and which the atmosphere contains in the ratio of one to ten thousand. The tail of the comet had contained none of this gas and had, therefore, given no response to the human eyes when viewed through the astronomers' telescopes. Its tail of over seven million miles had been invisible. The gas formation had a chemical affinity for opticum and had recovered every trace of it from the earth's atmosphere during the transit, leaving our atmosphere chemically intact except for the loss of opticum whose one value is to give sight to the optic nerve. I mention this at this point to show how a layman sometimes, in a casual way, hits upon a scientific truth of major importance.

I judged that my companion and I sat side by side for nearly an hour before I suggested that we try to move away from a place that now seemed totally isolated. Her hand held my wrist tightly and she talked very little. I felt that she was over-

THE FIRST HOUR —

come by the inexplicable disaster and waited as patiently as the terrifying circumstances would admit, before talking any more. Finally, my patience was exhausted, my brain was seething with thoughts; the dominant one being "How widespread was the disaster?"

I determined to seek some sort of aid for myself and my companion. I thought that our blindness might be only temporary and would respond to medical treatment. For about the last half of the time since I was first stricken the explosions had become fewer. I could still hear voices and cries coming to me from the direction of the Avenue, but these sounds were not so numerous or so blood-curdling as they had been earlier.

"My name is David Glenn MacKenzie," I said to my companion. "Suppose we try to find out something definite."

"I've heard of you," she said, quietly. "My name is Helen Reynolds."

"Not Miss Reynolds, the singer?" I asked, recalling the name of one of the world's greatest celebrities.

"The very same," she replied, "but I am afraid that my afternoon recital will have to be abandoned. I was scheduled to sing at 2:30."

"I imagine your singing today is out of the question, Miss Reynolds," I said.

BLIND

"Please call me Helen, Mr. MacKenzie, it sounds so formal to say 'Miss Reynolds' under the circumstances."

"Then you can call me 'Dave,'" I replied. "Everybody who really knows me, ignores the MacKenzie."

We were standing.

"Here we go, Helen," I said, trying to keep any idea of fright out of my voice. "Hold tightly to my left arm and I will feel my way with my right, along the wall and the fence."

"I am leaving everything to you, Dave," she said, and I could tell that this highly intelligent woman was doing her utmost to give me courage and assurance. We made progress slowly. Nothing seemed to be in our way for the first forty feet. Then my foot came into contact with something lying on the stone pavement. I leaned over and felt what appeared to be the body of a man. At first I thought that someone was lying down asleep, but immediately dismissed this as ridiculous. I felt along the body and finally my hand touched the face. As I felt the forehead, I noted that it was cool. I stood up, with a shudder.

"What is it?" asked Helen, in a whisper.

"The body of a man," I answered.

"Dead?" she asked, trembling.

THE FIRST HOUR —

"Yes," I replied.

We stepped over the body and came into contact with another, equally lifeless. Thus we made our way slowly to the Avenue, gripped with an awfulness of horror that neither of us could understand.

CHAPTER II

The Horror Grows

ALL sure estimates of time left me completely, after I first became blind. These references to time, therefore, must be merely arbitrary statements. The perpetual recording clocks in some of the big observatories straightened everything, later, so our official time sequence remained intact.

After what appeared to be an hour from the moment when sight left me, I stood with Helen Reynolds on Fifth Avenue, in front of the Metropolitan Museum. She clung tightly to my arm. Behind us we knew were dead and injured people. Why we had left the Museum steps, I could not tell. I simply knew that I was groping for some light on the disaster that had come to us. After leaning for several minutes against the heavy stone fence that fronts the Museum, I finally decided to make an effort to learn more, if possible.

"Suppose we try to cross the Avenue and go down toward the Plaza Hotel?" I suggested.

"Anything you say, Dave," replied my companion, so I started carefully to grope my way

THE HORROR GROWS

across while Helen clung desperately onto my arm. We had hardly gone what seemed to be ten feet before we bumped into an overturned bus; one of the big double-tier busses that ran on the Avenue. Telling Helen to hold tightly to my arm, I felt my way carefully along the length of the bus toward the front end. Putting my hand through the side window, my suspicions were confirmed. The driver was lying in a crumpled heap. I said nothing to Helen about it, not wishing to add to her fears but circled around the forward end of the bus and kept on. We came into contact with several other people who begged us to help them but in every case I told them I was just as helpless as they were. Some of them frantically grabbed at me and it was with difficulty that I threw them off. Once, Helen was pulled away from me and it was only by shouting "Helen" constantly and telling her to stand still and call to me that I finally got back to her. I explained that if both of us were in motion we would not be able to follow each other's voices as well as if one stood still. She was trembling violently when I reached her again and impulsively threw both her arms around me.

"Oh! Dave," she said, "I never felt so helpless in all my life. I was afraid I had lost you."

BLIND

"There, Helen," I replied, "we must be careful not to be separated again."

Somehow I seemed to take her hysterical outburst as quite the natural thing and so closely had we come into mental contact that her pleading didn't seem to be out of place in the slightest degree. I mention it at this time, to assist so far as possible in throwing the fullest light onto the situation that we faced. It will serve, also, to explain the relations between Helen Reynolds and me that developed from this tragic intimacy. Many readers, a century from now, will ridicule these detailed statements of small matters, especially as they have familiarized themselves with the entire tragedy that encompassed all humanity but I crave their indulgence and ask that I be allowed to put things in my own way. As I have recounted matters, I am hoping I may be able to have the students of later times not only know what took place but, in retrospect, live through those days in 1950 that came so dangerously near to wiping all humanity from the face of the earth. So, if you will bear with me, I shall, in telling my story, make occasional references of a philosophical nature, hoping more to illuminate your mind rather than to relieve my own.

We were now on the easterly side of Fifth Avenue. My mind had formulated no plan. With

THE HORROR GROWS

Miss Reynolds clinging to my arm, I realized that I must make, at least, a show of doing something definite. Putting my hand onto hers, indicating that I intended to try to walk along the sidewalk, I started making way cautiously toward the south. It might just as well have been in the other direction. I was holding myself mentally in check and hoping to hear something or meet with something that would explain just what was wrong.

Evidently sharing my fears, but with a restraint that reached the heroic, Helen trudged along with me. We met with numerous people, most of them terror-stricken to the point of madness. They talked incoherently or shouted. Some of them over whom we stumbled were on their knees praying. One woman was sobbing and moaning and plaintively crying for her baby that she had lost or which had been torn from her in the mad rush of many humans, struggling in their blindness.

"Why don't they try to talk to us?" asked Helen, after many attempts to get one of the people whom we met to answer a question.

I drew her up against the side of one of the big apartment houses. We were evidently under an awning as the sun's rays which had been scorching didn't strike so hotly as they had during our walk.

"They are crazed," I said to her. "This terror

BLIND

has now been on us for quite a while and slowly but surely they are going mad. It may be only temporary but we must be careful to avoid them until their minds have been adjusted to this new condition."

"You are a wonderful man, Dave," she said, and I knew, without my eyes to assure me, that she was smiling sweetly as she said it.

"Promise me you will not lose your mind as these poor people seem to be doing," I said to her.

"With you here, I feel somehow that everything is going to turn out all right in the end," she said to me, convincingly.

I had been holding myself well in hand ever since the first shock had come. The very presence of Miss Reynolds had helped me. How I would have behaved or what I would have done had she not been with me during these trying hours, I have never dared to speculate upon. I always felt that only Divine Providence could have sent so wonderful an inspiration to me at the very time when needed. But I must not wander and the matter is too deeply personal, anyway, to warrant giving it undue prominence.

My companion and I moved cautiously along Fifth Avenue, our path impeded occasionally by the wrecks of automobiles or airplanes that had hurtled onto the sidewalk at the time of the first

THE HORROR GROWS

shock. I had lost count of the blocks that we had passed since leaving the Museum, but by feeling on the corners of one of the big apartment houses that occupied that side of the Avenue, I found that we were now at 63d Street.

"We are nearing the Plaza," I said. "It must have taken us three hours to make this short distance."

Helen gave me an answering pressure of the hand as much as to say "very well." She had stopped talking, evidently feeling that talk wouldn't get us anywhere and tended to irritation. Already we were becoming reconciled to true thought as opposed to mere chatter.

"My apartment is just a few doors from the north corner of 60th," I told her, thus letting her know that I was not far from home. "I live at the Melvin, on the third floor," I continued. "I think we had best try to get there, if possible."

"I leave everything to you, David," she answered, and then, as an afterthought: "Will there be someone there?"

"I doubt if my man will be back," I replied. "He generally is away until after five, when I give him the day. I am a bachelor." I added this last fact for no particular reason, except that I felt that somehow, I wanted her to know it.

"Maybe your man will be unable to get back,"

BLIND

she suggested. "I mean that he may be as badly off as we are, with regard to his sight."

"That is true," I observed, "we have no way of telling how far-reaching is the disaster."

We had now arrived at 60th Street. I had counted the crossings at each of the three streets, since leaving 63d, and I confirmed my location by placing my hands on a low iron fence that fronted a bit of open space at the corner.

"This is 60th," I told my companion. "We go down about one hundred and fifty feet. I know every foot of the way."

Carefully we crawled along the curb. I think we met just one person up to the time when I decided we must be near my apartment. Then we turned in and I was gratified to find that my sense of distance was good, as we were at the front steps which I knew led into the Melvin.

There was no one at the entrance door, which was not locked. Cautioning Miss Reynolds regarding the steps, I entered the hallway. The heat of the street had not penetrated and it seemed quite cool inside.

"We will walk up the stairs," I told her. "They are at the side of the hall." We felt our way until my foot touched the lower stair and then, clinging to the railing, we walked up slowly.

We made the next flight in safety.

THE HORROR GROWS

"Just a few more feet, across the hall," I said, encouragingly. I found the wall, then the door, and, reaching for my keys, I opened the door. We stepped inside and I closed the door.

"Here we are, at home," I said, trying to put a note of optimism into my voice, but it fell flat. The woman clinging to my arm shuddered.

"Isn't it ghastly?" she said.

"Worse than that, Helen," I said, soberly. "I simply can not fathom it at all, but we still are intact except for our eyesight and we must try to figure it out as best we can."

I moved over to where I knew there was a big armchair and gently urged her to sit down.

"Wait here, Helen," I said, reassuringly, "while I feel around the apartment."

"Don't leave me, David," she cried, clinging to my arm, frantically. "I am afraid."

Realizing how completely unnerved she must be, I sat on the arm of the chair and talked to her, quietly. Finally her nervousness passed away and I then explained that I would find out if things were usable in the apartment.

"Keep talking to me!" she urged, so I made my inspection of the apartment, calling out to her my observations as I went about.

My chief object was to make sure that the water supply was intact. In my mind I had been

BLIND

running over the many possibilities of the disaster. I had decided that if other people were as blind and helpless as myself, all of the things which depended upon human activity must be in a chaotic condition. Had I even thought that the entire human family was in the same identical condition as myself, I doubt if I could have faced it. I would have gone insane.

To my delight, I found the water running in the kitchen. I even turned the hot water faucet and learned that the gas also was all right so far. The electric refrigerator seemed cool, but I noticed that the motor was not operating.

"No electricity," I shouted. "We are O.K. for a day, however," I assured her, to let her know that there were enough ice cubes to last for that time.

I made an inventory of the food-stuffs as well as my unseeing eyes would permit and estimated that we had the regular milk supply for evening and breakfast, maybe a couple of pounds of butter, a few oranges, a loaf of bread, a few strips of bacon, a dozen eggs or so and a few packages of breakfast foods and cookies. I don't know why I took the trouble to determine just how the larder stood, but some unseen force impelled me. The impressions of the few hours that had passed since sight left me, had given my mind a dull sense

THE HORROR GROWS

of utter helplessness. I seemed to feel the approach of an impending disaster that was to be even more depressing than the one that was now with me.

By reconciling my mind to accept death itself with perfect equanimity if it must come, I found that my brain cleared, suddenly, and except for my loss of sight, everything became normal. When I groped my way back to the living room, my mind was clear. I was all keyed up to the idea of setting out, at once, to determine just what had happened and how widespread it had become.

"Helen!" I said.

"Yes, David," she replied, "I was getting worried about you."

Knowing that I hadn't been out of the living room for five minutes and that I had spoken to her within two minutes of the five, I realized from her words that I must try to get her mind back into its regular routine. I must persuade her to relieve the tenseness under which her brain was functioning.

"I'm going to attempt a walk across the room without stumbling over the furniture," I said, trying to put cheerfulness into my voice. "Here I go!"

By touching a heavy library table that I knew was in the center of the room and exercising the

BLIND

utmost care, I reached the armchair where Helen was sitting, without catastrophe. I recall that I touched her shoulders first. As I did so, she grasped my arm with both hands, and clung desperately.

"Oh! David," she said in a choking voice. "I'm so glad you're back. I was so terribly alone." She began to sob, hysterically and I sat on the edge of the chair and tried to comfort her. After a while, her sobs ceased. Then I found myself stroking her hair and almost unconsciously my face went closer and closer to hers. As our cheeks touched, I felt an irresistible impulse to tell her that I loved her, but it seemed such a trite use of words. With the whole world in darkness and all the people we had met for hours either mad or rushing blindly into eternity, it seemed almost childish to tell this woman that I loved her. Why! I had never seen her. She had never seen me. We had known each other such a little while and only in tragedy. What would she think of me if I took advantage of her utterly helpless condition and said such a stupid thing as "I love you."

I held myself back and then a strange thing happened. I felt both of her arms go around my neck and her lips were pressed to mine.

"You are the most wonderful man I have ever known," she said, her marvelous musical voice

THE HORROR GROWS

giving the utterance a nobility that I cannot describe.

"I love you, Helen," was all that I could say, but I doubt if, in all human history, those simple words have ever been said with the same depth of feeling. So we sat, for a long time, reconciled even to utter blindness, in our overwhelming love.

CHAPTER III

The Night Passes

HELEN Reynolds and I sat together for a long time, neither of us speaking. My mind kept turning over the situation and the events leading up to it. The only real thing was the woman at my side. Her presence gave it a living reality. All else seemed a strange dream. The sudden loss of sight, without warning, the horror piled upon horror of death and destruction on every hand, without eyes to see it. The slow walk to my rooms, with a woman unknown to me until blindness threw us into a personal contact, strange and unbelievable. And now, it seemed as though I had known her all my life. I had told her I loved her, but not until she had let me know that she entertained a deep feeling for me.

I finally suggested that there was enough food for a light lunch.

"Well!" she said, brightly, "I suppose we may as well eat."

I helped her while we groped our way into the kitchenette. Patiently, I found some bread and butter and milk. I didn't dare to try to make tea or

THE NIGHT PASSES

coffee. I was afraid of the gas stove. We managed to eat, but as we did so, I realized how helpless we were, even in an environment with which I was fairly familiar.

"How do you think other people are eating?" asked Helen.

"I don't know!" I answered her. "Maybe only a few are afflicted. If so, the others will care for them."

Even as I said it, the terrible thought kept coming to me "What if everybody is as helpless as we are?"

It was this awful thought that prompted me to suggest that we try to learn just what had happened.

"Maybe we can find somebody who can throw some light on the matter," I suggested. We went back to a couch in the living room, on which I asked Helen to rest.

First I tried my radio. I had just installed a new "all-world" set that gave me the leading stations in the world capitals. It was a powerful set, without any electrical connections, tuned with a new system of tubes. I had intended taking it with me on a trip to Newfoundland and had purposely avoided the house-current installation. That morning, I had heard Petrograd, Tokio, Berlin,

BLIND

Melbourne, London, Paris and Rio Janeiro, so I knew the set was in perfect shape.

I began turning the dial, but to no effect. Finally, I had exhausted the entire scope of the dial and not a flicker came from the speaker. It was absolutely dead. I crossed, carefully, to the phone table and picked up the receiver. Not even a friendly buzz. It, too, was dead. I then went to the electric switch and turned it on. I put my hand on one of the lamp bulbs and it was cold. I went over to Helen and sat down beside her.

Evidently my mood was so depressed that she could sense it, as she said, "What is it, Dave? Don't be afraid to tell me."

"You must be brave, my dear!" I said. "I don't know what has happened, but it evidently can't be confined wholly to New York. The radio isn't in operation anywhere in the whole world, at least not just now. My set seems to be completely dead. The telephone also is dead. The electric current appears to be cut off. The fact that there is gas in our connections and that the water supply is all right simply means that these require no human manipulation."

"Do you mean that the whole world has gone blind?" she asked, the awfulness of the question striking a new terror into my heart.

"I hope not," I said, trying to be quite casual,

THE NIGHT PASSES

"but until we learn to the contrary we must assume that such is the case, and try to meet it. Our first problem is the purely personal one of finding out our chances of looking after our immediate needs."

"I'm afraid I can't be of much help, David," was her only comment.

"I don't know how things are going to come out, eventually, my dear," was my reply, "but this much I want you to know. If it hadn't been for your very presence, I don't know what I would have done. It forced me to keep quiet. I might have rushed madly onto the Avenue and been struck by a bus whose driver had suddenly lost control. As it is, we are still alive. We have a place to stay, until we learn more about the situation."

She patted my hand.

"Now, my dear, I think we will find out just what time it is. Suppose we guess at the time. My clock is non-striking, but I can feel the hands and tell the time."

"I say it is about three o'clock," Helen suggested.

"I think it is nearer to four," was my estimate.

I went to the mantel and opened the front of my clock. I felt carefully at the hands. The short hand pointed at seven and the long hand was at twelve.

BLIND

"My dear," I said. "Time is running away from us. It is exactly seven o'clock." I closed the clock and returned to Helen.

"Suppose we go out on a little trip of exploration?" I suggested.

"I am entirely in your hands, Dave," she acquiesced.

So taking a walking stick with me, making sure of my front door key against our return, we made our way into the street. I had in mind a little basement grocery store on the corner, three blocks east. It was cooler, as we walked along. We bumped into a man who was standing at the next corner. He was leaning against the side of a big apartment house, and moaning as though in pain.

I spoke to him.

"What's the matter, friend?" I said.

"I think my arm is broken," he replied. "I fell down about an hour ago and gave it a terrible jolt."

"Let me feel it," I said, and while Helen clung to my coat and held my cane, I examined his arm as well as I could. I decided that it was only a sprain.

"I'm tired of asking people, sir," he said to me, "but are you blind, too?"

"Yes!" I said. "Have you met many people?"

"Fewer and fewer since it came on," he said.

THE NIGHT PASSES

"I was in a mob of people at the Grand Central Station. I fought my way out. It was terrible. Everybody seemed crazy. I've been all the afternoon getting up here. Everybody I met seemed half crazy. I must have stumbled over hundreds of dead people. Can you tell me what the matter is? I'm afraid I'm beginning to go crazy."

"I don't know what happened," I said to him, "any more than you do. I only know that I seemed to go blind and have been that way for the past six hours. I have been at my own apartment for some time and I am now going over to a little grocery store near here to see if they are operating. I may need some food for a day or two until the whole thing straightens out."

"But what in God's name is there worth straightening out? Forty times already I seemed perfectly willing to die. Nobody appears to be doing anything. I hadn't met a living soul except you for over an hour."

"Do you live around here?" I asked.

"No, I live in Greenwich. Why I came up here, I don't know. I just had to keep going. What street are we on, anyway?"

I told him and he let out one of the most fearful cries I had ever heard.

"Sixtieth Street in New York, at seven o'clock and everybody blind. My God, Mister, do you

BLIND

blame me for wanting to die? My wife is expecting a baby, sometime tonight or tomorrow. Suppose she and the doctors are all as blind as we are."

I tried to calm him by telling him that maybe the affliction had not reached to Greenwich. "Maybe it is only confined to New York," I said to him. But back in my consciousness the conviction was becoming firmer that everybody else had gone blind as well as those whom I had met.

I finally induced him to sit down and wait for us to return, promising to come back within a half hour and assuring him that we would share our supper with him. Helen and I went slowly, on our way, reaching the little store without meeting anybody. We cautiously groped our way down a few steps. I found the door unlocked and stepped inside. As I did so, a woman spoke.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Why, Hello!" I answered. "I'm Mr. MacKenzie, who are you?"

"I am Mrs. Borofsky," and I realized that it was the wife of the proprietor.

"Is Mr. Borofsky about?" I inquired.

"No, I came to find him," she answered. Then as if it was a foolish question, but one that had to be put to me, she asked: "Are you blind like me?"

"Yes, Mrs. Borofsky," I replied, trying to hide

THE NIGHT PASSES

the real thoughts in my mind. "I guess everybody around here was afflicted the same way. Where did you come from?"

"From our house. The time it happened, I began to scream. Everybody else in our tenement was the same way—all yelling, but when it didn't hurt, I stopped screaming after a while and then I tried to talk to some neighbors but all they could do was jabber like crazy people. Children in the streets were crying. Everybody seemed crazy, all at once. So I thought maybe if I could get over here to the store, maybe Borofsky would take care of me. I got here a long time ago. I had to fight with lots of people, but I knew how to feel the way and when I got here nobody was here. So I'm waiting. Maybe Borofsky will come back."

"I hope so, Mrs. Borofsky. I wonder if you could let me have a supply of goods?"

"Sure, what good are they to me? I can't cook 'em. If I tried to take 'em home somebody would take 'em away from me. Sure, take 'em all. They ain't any good," she was mumbling to herself, incoherently.

"I'll tell you what we can do, Mrs. Borofsky," I said, hoping to calm her. "We will take a supply of goods up to my apartment. You can stay here in the store, tonight. In the morning we will come back and, if there isn't any change in conditions

BLIND

we will try and arrange some way to show you how to take care of matters until we know more about everything."

The poor thing was so unstrung that she couldn't offer either objections or suggestions. I didn't wish to have her husband return and not find her. Blind though he might be, his presence would be helpful. So we worked for a half hour or so, packing goods into a basket. We took several cans of condensed milk, dry groceries, breakfast foods and some canned goods. Helen suggested that we take a couple of bottles of spring water. I had a general idea of what we needed, but it was almost impossible to tell where the articles were stored. It seemed a shame that here was a refrigerator half filled with milk and nobody to use it, when there must be millions in New York City who needed it at that very moment. We finally left her, giving her every assurance that we would return, early in the morning.

As we approached the corner where we had left the man from Greenwich, Helen, who was helping me to carry the rather heavy basket, suggested that it might be a good idea to see if there were signs of life in the building where he was stationed. I, too, had given a rambling thought to planning some sort of community of interest, with

THE NIGHT PASSES

others afflicted as ourselves. We finally reached the corner where the Greenwich man was supposed to be waiting only to find the place vacant.

"Are you sure that this is the corner?" Helen asked.

"Positive," I told her, at the same time explaining the markings on which I depended.

In a loud voice I shouted "Hello!" It was the first time that I had made the slightest outcry. My voice sounded hollow. It died away as though we were in a vast wilderness, leaving both of us chilled with fear. It was so gruesome to think that a shout as loud as that, on an August evening at this corner of 60th Street would not get a response.

"I'm afraid most of them can't stand up mentally, under it," I said to Helen. We picked up the heavy basket of groceries and continued back to my apartment. I noticed that both of us walked with more confidence. Even during the few hours since we had gone blind we had acquired a sort of sixth sense.

We arranged the things we had brought from the store and Helen helped me in the kitchen while we ate some of the things. I even took a chance on making some tea over the gas jets, little knowing that this luxury was not to last very long.

BLIND

I tried the telephone, repeatedly, and also tried to tune in on my radio set, but there was no response. We debated the situation in all of its phases so far as our imagination could go and finally, tired and worn out, mentally, we arranged to go to sleep, hoping that the morning might give us some explanation of the clutching blight that seemed to have taken the entire world into its blinding grip.

I allotted my sleeping room to Helen while I used the room of my man. What had happened to him, I could only conjecture.

After saying "good night" to Helen, trying to calm any growing fears that might become too much for her mind to fight against and receiving her assurance that she was leaving everything to me, I went to the open window and looked out, with unseeing eyes. The air was cool. I felt no pain, just a dull sense of oppression. Not a sound came to me from the street, below.

Baffled at any attempt to think coherently, I at last decided that there was nothing but sleep and hope. I stood, for just a moment, at the room where Helen had gone. I could hear her breathing, deeply.

"She loves me," I thought. "Loves me, and trusts me to find the way out."

THE NIGHT PASSES

As I lay down to sleep, a calmness seemed to stretch over me. And so we went into the first night.

Editor's Note: Mr. MacKenzie, at this point, gave several chapters to the details of the following morning and the succeeding days. These details seemed quite important to the author, but do not appear to the editor as being necessary to get a proper perspective of the world tragedy. The next chapter, therefore, will take us to the events of the tenth day.

W. H. McM.

CHAPTER IV

The Tenth Day

I HAVE called this chapter "The Tenth Day" for the simple purpose of letting readers know that the terrible monotony of our existence had become merely a matter of the passing of time. Reconciled, after the first three or four days, to the fact that we were absolutely in the hands of fate, we had decided to hold on, tenaciously, until human endurance could stand no more. Death, as such, held no terrors for us.

By us, I mean Helen and myself. Mrs. Borofsky insisted on staying at her little store, where she tried to take care of her needs in a crude way. Like ourselves, she was relying for food upon canned goods which she obtained from the many cans in her stock. A can-opener to her was a gift from Providence. Our water supply still held up, the one refreshing thing that was still with us.

On the tenth morning, I greeted Helen in my regular manner. Going to her door, I said, as cheerily as I could, "Good morning, Helen dear. It is the tenth morning since we came home. I wonder what the decimal table will do for us?"

THE TENTH DAY

She was up and dressed, waiting for me, and came to me in her usual way, greeting me with a warm embrace.

"David," she said, "I wonder you can keep up your spirits, like this. How long do you feel it can continue until both of us must give up, entirely?"

"Come here, Helen," I said, leading her to the big couch in the living room which we had used as a sort of headquarters, "I want to talk to you." As that was about the only thing we hadn't stopped doing, she didn't appear surprised in the least.

"Even before breakfast, my dear," I said to her, "I want you to go over everything, once more, and see if we are going forward or backward. In either case, I have a definite plan."

She sat closely by me and held onto my arm. Her wonderful personality was always an inspiration. This morning I seemed to be particularly inspired.

"Here is our situation, my dear," I said. "It was just ten days ago that our eyesight left us. Not only you and I were afflicted but, so far as we know, everybody in the entire world. I have given up thinking that it was some devilish chemical made by some foreign power and used in America to destroy us, with the object later of taking possession of our country and its wealth. That idea

BLIND

was good, as an idea, but it doesn't seem to work out as I think of it, calmly. I have gone back to my original hypothesis, as everything seems to confirm it—that our atmosphere has lost an elemental gas that is necessary for sight."

"But suppose this condition continues? What will we do then?" Helen was putting a question that I had already asked myself hundreds of times during the past ten days.

"So far as city dwellers are concerned," I said to her, "they must either die or go out into the country, where they may, in time, learn to live under these new conditions."

Even when I said it, I knew that I hadn't told her the truth.

"David!" she said, and I knew that she was striving to keep her voice from breaking. "I am convinced that humanity cannot exist without eyesight for any length of time. At best it will be a lingering death for all of those who have so far survived."

"You may be correct, my dear," I was forced to reply. "When I recall the boastfulness of men of science—those who have told us about man's great inventive genius, how we have conquered space and time and disease, I have to smile. Here, with one touch from nature's vast laboratory, humanity is helpless."

THE TENTH DAY

"How many are dead?" asked Helen.

"If the affliction covers the whole world," I said to her, "I am sure that more than half of all the people in New York are already dead. If sight doesn't return, very soon, each day will find tens of millions everywhere dead. Our civilization is passing as other civilizations have passed in different ways during the countless eternities since time began."

"And we can do nothing?" She asked the question as though it were a kind of prayer.

"Nothing, my dear," I said to her. "We can only hope. We are helpless in the hands of the keeper of our destinies."

"Are you afraid?" she asked me, in an awed whisper.

"No, dear," I replied. "I have removed fear forever from my life. You, too, must not fear."

"With you here, David, I am not afraid." A sweet calm was in her voice and I leaned over and kissed her, fervently.

"We will go on to the very end, without fear." She didn't answer me in words, but a quiet hope came into my heart and I went into the day's work with more spirit than I had shown for several days past.

We ate one of those meals that had already become almost unbearable. Using condensed cream

BLIND

in place of fresh and with some canned fruits and coffee, we forced it down. I noticed that the gas was very low. From this, I surmised that other people were using gas and that the big supplies at the gasometers must be depleted. This meant that we would shortly be without heat. After that only foods already cooked and fresh water. The thought of fresh water being cut off, I dared not entertain. All that I knew was that the vast reservoirs of water feeding into the water mains of the city appeared to be doing their work. I merely hoped that it would continue.

Once every day, and sometimes twice, we had been going over to the little store to see Mrs. Borofsky. Her husband had not come back. She had gone to their apartment, the day after the blight, only to find the entire place in turmoil. Her story of it, as told to us, hours later, had confirmed my ideas. This tenth morning we started for the little store determined to bring her back to my rooms. On the way down stairs, we encountered a man. He was talking incoherently to himself. I touched him and he grabbed my arm convulsively.

"I'm starving. Please give me something to eat," he cried, and then he fell in a faint.

It required all my strength and that of Helen, who helped me, to get him back into my rooms. I

THE TENTH DAY

could tell that his clothes were in rags. He needed a bath as well as food. We decided to waive all questions of delicacy and take care of him, so in a few minutes he was stripped of everything and after giving him a complete renovation in the bathroom, we carried him into my room, and put him between two sheets. I then got him some water and some fruit juices from a can of peaches. By this time he was out of his stupor and though very weak, seemed able to talk rationally.

He had lost all trace of time or distance. All that he knew was that at the time when blindness struck him, he was in an elevator in a downtown office building. Fortunately it was not running at the moment. With several others he had stepped into the corridor of the building after the operator had opened the door. He remembered that it was at the thirtieth floor and that there were scores of people rushing madly about in the corridor. He recalled that hours afterward he started to go down the stairs, after finding the doors that led down. As he told the story he would lose himself and repeat. I finally got from him that the stairs, all the way down, were so crowded that it was almost impossible to make any headway.

After a night spent in the building with others who were even more helpless than himself, he fought his way down to the ground floor and onto

BLIND

Broadway. He said it wasn't self-preservation that compelled him to fight his way. He explained that it was because he thought he might find some help and go back.

When I asked him if anybody tried to tell him what was the matter, his answer was that I was the only person he had met during the entire ten days who appeared able to do anything. It had taken nearly two hours to get his story and every question and answer only baffled us the more.

He couldn't explain how he had gotten so far uptown. It seemed surprising that a man could have strayed so far from the spot where the blindness had come to him and I thought of the millions of humans who had peopled New York's business section on that day and I knew that between my rooms and the Brooklyn Bridge in the little space between the city's two river boundaries more people had died within the ten days than there were in all the colonies at the time of the Revolution. Here was one of that vast population of stricken people and he would have been dead inside of another day if he hadn't come into the Melvin the very time we were leaving.

Our guest was now asleep. We left him, after taking the precautions to lock him in his room. I didn't care to let Helen stay with him although she would have done so had I asked her. We

THE TENTH DAY

started out again to go to the little grocery store. It was so quiet when we entered that I thought Mrs. Borofsky must be asleep. Such was not the case. I found her in a corner of the store, lying on an improvised bed. She was dead. We took the body into the yard, in back of the store. There was nothing that we could do, further. We left it there, knowing that the rats and worms and vermin would soon be at work. We went back into the store and I made a survey of the supplies remaining on the shelves. I decided that it would be good judgment to move all the usable stock to my rooms and with that end in view, we loaded a basket with supplies and trudged back with it. Two hours or more must have passed, but our guest was still sleeping, so I didn't disturb him. We worked all day making trips to the little store and back. It may seem almost unbelievable, but not once during the day did we encounter a human being. I merely state the fact, as it will tend to show how the people of the city had abandoned activity.

Late in the afternoon, our guest awoke and I realized at once that his mind was quite clear. It was the first time in the ten days that he had slept in comfortable surroundings. He told us that he was an insurance man, with one of the larger companies. He could scarcely believe that Helen and I were as blind as himself. We talked for sev-

BLIND

eral hours and he amplified his story of the morning. He admitted that he had been out of his mind several times during the ten days. At first he resented the idea of joining us until we had found a solution of the difficulty that we were facing, but I quickly put him at his ease.

I explained the relations of Helen and myself and was pleased to learn that he had heard of Miss Reynolds, in fact he had heard her sing at one of her recent recitals. I had supplied him with a suit of clothes. To him the supper which we attempted was very acceptable, while to us, it was the same old monotony.

The gas had failed us completely. Our guest, whose name was Henry Partridge, asked us if we hadn't found some of those little brimstone cakes, with wicks in them, that could be used. The idea was so good that Helen and I went back to the store and after a long search, located a supply of these very serviceable articles. We returned with a full supply of them.

I know that such trivial details as these may appear ridiculous a century from now, when the people of the world will be able to visualize the overwhelming tragedy as a whole. And yet, even though I was beginning to grasp the significance of the disaster, and even the awful possibility that humanity and civilization were surely going to

THE TENTH DAY

pass forever from the world, it was little things like this that made such deep and lasting impression upon my mind that I feel compelled to give them to you. Please understand that I attach no value to them except as they mirror my mind. For that purpose alone, I put them down.

That night, for instance, I remember very distinctly, just before we went to our beds, our guest being assigned to the couch in the living room, Helen went to the piano and ran her fingers along the keys. She had never touched the piano before. She struck a chord and then began to hum a song. It was a new song by an English composer, entitled "The Traveler's Song." Her wonderful voice grew stronger as she finished the stanza. Then she sang the magnificent chorus as only Helen Reynolds could sing it. As she reached the last lines, so expressive of the life of all humanity, she filled the room with her wondrous charm and melody.

"But on through the night I will sing,
For the way leads me on to the city,
On to the palace of my King."

Partridge, who was sitting near me, reached over and clasped my hand. "MacKenzie," he said, "it's almost worth all I've been through, to hear Miss Reynolds sing like that."

So came another night.

CHAPTER V

Fever and Sickness

EACH day became a mere repetition of the dread monotony. Partridge, our guest, was rather an agreeable person, but in so intimate a relationship his mentality soon disclosed itself as lacking in any brilliancy. His was the generally accepted chatterbox conversation, from which there was no escape except in the tireless activity of talking pictures, airplane trips and the general run of amusements. The awfulness of our predicament didn't make its impression felt, so far as Partridge was concerned.

After his first few days with us, I thought I detected an irritableness on Helen's part when he insisted on making the same observations over and over as though he were illuminating some great truth. So I decided that she and I would go out ostensibly for explorations, leaving him alone. I know that it will look as if it was the height of cruelty to do this, but all standards of human contact had entirely changed. Necessity compelled it.

It was the fourteenth day that Helen and I left Partridge alone in the apartment and made our

FEVER AND SICKNESS

way as far as Central Park. Somehow the fear of getting lost in our walks never appealed to us. In fact, my sense of direction seemed to have been intensified during the days that had passed since the blindness. We got to the Avenue and found the way completely blocked. Not only that but the mass of wreckage in the way gave off a foul odor. I knew it was one of the disagreeable things we must soon face, and I was secretly planning to make a desperate effort to reach some place in one of the parks in the Bronx, but the food problem was more important.

The idea that rats and vermin would soon be in control of the city had also been figured out. We were now getting our first evidence that this condition had already started. I know it is not pleasant reading, but one of humanity's greatest problems has been to fight disease and disease is nothing more or less than uncleanness.

As we stood just beyond the curbing on the Avenue, realizing that we were up against the wreck of a huge bus in which scores of dead bodies were massed, I pictured similar conditions on every street of the city. A rat ran over my foot. I shuddered at the thought that maybe our apartment might soon be overrun with them. Whether they were sightless or not, I couldn't answer. In

BLIND

either case they had an advantage over blind human beings.

Impelled by curiosity, and also determined that Helen and I must fight on and on, I decided to cross the Avenue and see if there was a clear space in the Park. I cannot tell you, in words, the strange and harmonious relationship that had come to Helen Reynolds and myself. Here it was fourteen days after the world had gone blind and we two had become so accustomed to each other's words that we seemed to act as one. Except for each night's sleep, we had been in constant contact with each other. I knew now why two blind people, living together, appeared able to communicate thoughts without words.

We made our way around the huge wreckage, which had evidently burned itself into a charred mass and, avoiding other similar obstructions, finally reached the other side. The odors still persisted, but not quite so penetrating as they were at the wreckage. We finally found an open space and sat down. Then I told her why I had brought her.

"It was thoughtful of you, David," she said. "I was almost ready to shriek at his continuing chatter. I never realized how fearfully commonplace our modern life had become. With you I

FEVER AND SICKNESS

feel at peace, in spite of our almost hopeless condition."

"I, too, feel at peace, my dear. This great adventure was never designed just to bring you and me together. It would be the very limit of selfishness to ascribe anything except pure accident to our meeting."

"Go on, David," she said, eagerly.

"And yet," I continued, "I have always felt that I wanted to know you. I just missed one of your concerts. Then I had a call to London. When I returned, you were on a Western tour. I seemed always to miss you. But when the world was plunged into chaos, at the very time when you could mean more to me than anything else on earth, I reached out my hands and found you."

"Why, David, you have known me for such a long time and you never told me before."

"I was afraid you might think it wasn't really true, my dear," I replied to her, "but, as you say, we have known each other for a long time. We have lived together for centuries during the past fourteen days. We know each other as no two other people in all human history have known each other. It is all beyond my understanding."

We sat for several hours, hearing the chimes in one of the nearby towers striking the quarters, with rich musical notes. Unattended by human

BLIND

hands, the mechanism went ahead just as though nothing had happened.

"Do you feel well, my dear?" I asked her, for the thousandth time during the past few days.

"Quite well, David," she replied. "I am hoping that we both avoid fevers. As sick people, we would be unable to go on."

"That is quite true, dear." I felt of her head and it seemed rather more warm than usual. Fearful, I decided to go back and urge her to bathe in the cool water that still stood by us in our city supply pipes. Without the water supply, coming in fresh and clear from the hills, we would have already been dead.

We found Partridge in a sort of stupor. He seemed listless, as if he didn't care whether he lived or died. I finally prevailed upon him to take some sleeping tablets and go to sleep, although it was only a little after noontime. Helen forced her tired body to go through the ordeal of a cool bath. The heat of the day was becoming unbearable.

Helen said she was refreshed after her bath and laid down in her own room. I assured her that I was in perfect shape, mentally and physically. I was determined that I would keep up the struggle to the very last ounce of strength. I stepped over to the couch where Partridge was

FEVER AND SICKNESS

lying. He was in sound sleep, the sedative having gotten in its work. Perspiration was pouring from me in streams. A while later, I appeared quite refreshed and suddenly realized that some sort of fever had burned itself out in my system and that the perspiration was the culmination.

Helen was not so fortunate. That evening she became delirious. Incoherent shouts, laughter and cries came from her at intervals. I managed to get her to drink quantities of cool water, and occasionally she would sip some of the juices from the store of canned fruits that we had piled up. Partridge woke up, late at night, but he was no use as a helper. I couldn't get his mind to comprehend our new situation. As long as he didn't become violent, I was satisfied.

For two days I had them both on my hands. Helen in a fever and Partridge in a state bordering on coma. Helen, on the seventeenth day, returned to consciousness. It was quite early in the morning. I heard her call, "David!"

I went, at once, to her room. Putting my hand on her forehead, I felt beads of perspiration, but under it, I detected that her forehead was cool. Then I knew that the fever had passed as mine had two days before.

"I have had a terrible dream, David," she said, weakly. "I thought I had lost you. I was in a

BLIND

great room where there were big furnaces. I couldn't find you anywhere."

"There, dear," I said soothingly, "you are feeling much better, now."

"Much better, David. Tell me! When is it going to end? It seems as if I can't stand it any longer."

"Just a little while longer, dear. I'm sure it will end, very soon."

"But why not end it, right away, David? I'm not afraid to die. Why can't we end it and have it over with?"

"It isn't the right thing to do, dear." This was all I could say. But it didn't satisfy her.

"What odds can one or two more deaths make in such a catastrophe? How many are dead now, David?"

"It is impossible to guess, my dear," I told her, trying to treat her question as though it were the most natural kind of query. "I should say that three-fourths of those in New York seventeen days ago, must be dead."

"Seventeen days, David?" she repeated, trembling.

"Yes, dear. You have been sleeping for three days."

She burst into tears. Violent sobs that she couldn't control shook her frame. I tried to console her. As I held her closely, I realized that she

FEVER AND SICKNESS

had lost a great deal of her vitality. She was not nearly as strong as she had been, two weeks before. Her magnificent physique was beginning to feel the strain. As I held her tightly, while her very soul seemed to be crying out for help, I uttered a fervent prayer that it would soon end; one way or the other. Even as I did so, my mind carried the picture of hundreds of millions of others who had prayed in vain during the past seventeen terrible days. Would my prayer, too, go unanswered?

At last, her strength gone, Helen became calm. She leaned against me as though I was her only hope or comfort.

"I'm sorry, David, but I couldn't help it," she said, apologetically. "You will forgive me, this time, won't you? I promise you I'll never give way again."

Tears were in my eyes as I stroked her hair and tried to tell her that she was the most wonderful woman in all the world. I made her lie down while I tried to get the breakfast hoping that this continuous diet of ready foods, canned goods and prepared milks, would not ruin our digestive systems before the time when relief might come.

Helen responded to my efforts at breakfast but Partridge was off his food, entirely. Try as I could, I was unable to get him even to attempt

BLIND

to eat any of the things I prepared. The day passed without further accident. Helen appeared almost cheerful. My brain seemed to function more clearly than it had for days. I was so cheerful, in fact, that I wondered whether or not I was getting light-headed. But my talks with Helen were so reassuring that I figured we were slowly adjusting ourselves to our condition—terrible though it was.

Partridge came out of his stupor at midnight, long after Helen had retired. He ate some canned peaches that I opened for him and also drank some coffee that I prepared over a patented burner. He surprised me with his courage.

"MacKenzie," he said to me suddenly, "I don't see any use in trying to keep going. Here it is seventeen days, you say, and I am as weak as a cat. The whole world is dying. Why should you and I and Miss Reynolds think we can survive?"

"I don't know just how to answer you, Partridge," I replied, that being the exact state of my mind.

"Of course you don't," he said. "There isn't any answer. God Almighty isn't picking you or me out, especially. We would have been dead long ago except for an accident.

"More than that," he said, gaining courage as he went along, "I don't see any use in living, any-

FEVER AND SICKNESS

way. What fun will it be to live in a world where all your loved ones are dead? My wife and two little kids! Probably all dead and not even buried." He began to cry.

"My God!" he suddenly shrieked. "I don't want to live. I want to die, MacKenzie."

He stood up and began to shout in a crazed frenzy. "I want to die. I want to die. God strike me dead!" and other wild ravings came from him in a steady stream. Then I heard him fall and as I went over and felt of him, lying prone on the floor, I thought his desire to die had been met, but found, on closer examination, that he was in a dead faint.

Helen had been roused by his shouts, as well she might have been. Everything was so deathly still at all times that any disturbance seemed a bedlam.

"What is it, David?" she asked me, from the doorway.

"Partridge has gone out of his head," I told her, "and just after he showed signs of being calm."

I lifted him onto the couch and left him, hoping that sleep would restore him. I then went back to Helen and calmed her again, urging her to go to bed and conserve her strength.

For want of something better to talk about, I

BLIND

told her of Partridge and debated upon the mental phenomenon of a man perfectly normal working himself into a state of temporary insanity by arguing with his own fears.

"We must avoid discussing these terrible things, my dear," I assured her. "By deliberately ignoring them and assuming a tranquillity of mind, we can preserve our sanity."

"We are not all as philosophical as you, David," she replied. "Some of us are more temperamental and less balanced."

"Thank you, dear," I said, cheerfully, "but I feel that great dangers and great situations produce great courage and great philosophers. We are hoping that we will sometime be out of our difficulty. I want you to be sane and ready for the situation we must face when that time comes."

"Will it be any worse than the one we are in, now?" she asked, nervously.

"There is no way of telling, dear," I replied. "But whatever it is, we must be ready. So you will now go to bed and to rest. I hope Partridge stays asleep until morning."

"How much longer must it go on, David?" she asked, plaintively.

"I don't know, Helen, dear. But whatever the time, we must not shrink from facing it."

CHAPTER VI

A New Horror

I HAVE no other object in this personal history of the world tragedy than to present as I saw them, some of the dramatic incidents that, pieced together, may serve to bring clearly before the people of future ages a comprehensive idea of the tragedy itself and its effect upon civilization. No effort of mine is needed to know the state of society at the time the tragedy took place. Libraries, filled with books that it will take centuries to read, all the piled-up stores of what we called wealth were left intact, to enrich future generations. But the story of the tragedy, itself, must be told over and over again. My duty, as I saw it, was to tell it in my way, hoping that in so doing I was performing a real service to posterity.

I do not hope to avoid criticism. That is the least of my troubles. When my story is read, I will be impervious to criticism unless it reaches me in the great beyond. My own opinion is that most critics fail to reach heaven as there is no need for even the self-styled "constructive" critics in paradise. As I have already lived through hell,

BLIND

I have no fear as to the eternal resting place of my soul. So, feeling assured that I am never to feel the sting of criticism for my story, I am writing it in my own way and not to disarm criticism. Even so, I feel that I need the most hearty co-operation of readers and make these occasional explanations to induce that help in understanding my methods.

Two more hectic days passed. Partridge pulled himself together and acted normal. I made two trips to the Park, with Helen. The dead blankness of our existence was beginning to wear me down. Always groping, physically and mentally, I had become so morose in my innermost thoughts that I found it more and more difficult to keep my real feelings out of my voice. Helen's talks with me had become interchanges on music and art and finer things, but even as we discussed them we knew they had all passed from the stage of life.

If anything was left for humanity, it was a mere living in a world where social contact was gone. The more I thought of what the world would be to those who survived the tragedy that enmeshed us, the more depressed I became.

Time after time, I was for ending it all. It wouldn't take any effort. Just a swallow of poison from my medicine case for each of us and it

A NEW HORROR

would be over. It is surprising how calmly I contemplated it. I found that the thought of death as a complete end of our troubles gave me a surprising hope to continue. So the nineteenth day came to a close, and after another monotonous nerve-wracking meal the three of us prepared for bed.

It was Helen who noticed it first.

"I smell smoke," she said, sniffing the air.

The air in our apartment had not been of the clearest. Some days a breeze would bring in objectionable odors. Day after day, I had hoped for rain, but it seemed as though none was ever to come.

Partridge and I took deep breaths and agreed with her. A few minutes later there was no doubt that smoke was pouring into our windows.

I went to the window and listened. The smoke was becoming more concentrated, making the air choking in its denseness.

"What do you think?" asked Helen, coughing.

"There is a big fire raging, but it is some distance away," I said.

"Nothing to stop it from getting here," suggested Partridge.

"Nothing except that it will burn out all the oxygen in the air and die out." This was the only hope I could offer.

BLIND

"Where can we go, David?" asked Helen.

"Only into the Park. When it stops, we can come back."

Before going, we closed all the windows in my apartment. I went to the medicine case and selected a bottle of poison. Opening it to make sure that I had the right bottle, I carefully recorked it and put it into my pocket. Then, with Partridge's help, I rolled up three blankets and we started for the place in the Park that Helen and I knew so well. The smoke was not so dense on the street as it had been in our rooms and I gathered, from this, that it was from a great distance. As we walked along, we heard roar after roar as though a battle was taking place, miles away.

"Big gasoline tanks blowing up along the water front," I observed, for want of any more direct information.

The air was quite clear in the Park. We laid out our blankets in the hope of making a night of it. As I reviewed the events of the nineteen tragic days and realized that here was a new horror upon us, I decided that I would end it, two days later, unless something more definite than mere hope came to relieve the situation. It is all very well to view things in retrospect and see how they could have been changed. But to be

A NEW HORROR

in the midst of them, with nothing to help one, is an entirely different matter.

It must have been three hours later that I opened my sightless eyes to find that a gentle rain was falling. The rain seemed so fresh and sweet, compared to the unclean air I had been breathing for several days that I took several long deep breaths. Then I woke Helen and Partridge.

"Wake up!" I shouted. "It's raining."

They were as thrilled as I at the change in the air. We decided to go back to the apartment, hoping that the rain would either stop the fire in its progress or clear up the smoke in the air. By the time we had gotten back, we found the air practically free from smoke. Gratefully, we went to our beds and laid down, listening, like happy children, to one of the most drowning downpours of rain I ever heard come from the clouds. I went to sleep with the sound of the rain in my ears.

The morning of the twentieth day found the three of us refreshed with a night of breathing clean air. Both Helen and Partridge had real appetites. But our spirits soon became depressed again and at noon, hoping to give Helen a little courage, I suggested that we go out to our place in the Park.

Not a word was said by either of us on our way. I held her hand as was our custom and we

BLIND

went over the same route that we knew so well, avoiding those obstructions that we had vividly placed in our minds. I thought I felt an occasional rat or mouse scurrying across my feet, but I attached no significance to it at the time.

We sat down on the grass that was still wet from the night's heavy rain. We had learned to pay very little attention to ordinary comforts. Even the wet grass was incidental. We had more important things in mind.

When I left with Helen for what she believed to be just another of our long talks in the Park, it was my intention to make a sort of final agreement with her regarding the end of our troubles. I had made up my mind that we would end it all but to end it with due deliberation.

"Helen," I said, in a most casual manner, "I think we may as well face the fact now as any time." I paused for the words to sink in. She waited, without comment. "I am convinced that there is no way out." I could feel her draw a long breath.

"Very well, David," was all she said, evidently waiting for me to explain further.

"I have decided that we will go on for just one more day," I said, "and then we will end it all, of our own free wills. I am doing this because I am afraid that at any moment one or both of us

A NEW HORROR

may go mad and God alone knows what that might mean in suffering."

"You know what is best for us, David," she said. "I have lived a lifetime in the last twenty days. If we must end it all now, with death, I want you to know that in spite of the terrible experience I have been through, I wouldn't change one single day. To have loved you and know that you loved me in return has meant more to me than life."

"Until tomorrow, my love, we will live one glorious day for each other." I held her in my arms. The entire world was dying. The few remaining people could have but a few days or weeks at most before the end must come. I forgot it all. I only knew that the most glorious woman on earth had told me that there was only one world and that was the love that we held for each other. Everything seemed unreal except that. Even the end that we had planned for the next day didn't enter to spoil the overwhelming sweetness of our compelling love.

We went back to the apartment late in the afternoon. Partridge, for some unaccountable reason, was in a jovial mood. We expected to find him morose, and the relief was pleasant to say the least.

"This air is surely a treat, MacKenzie," was the way he greeted our return.

BLIND

"It surely is, Partridge," was the only comment I could make.

"I was thinking, this afternoon as I sat here, all alone," he went on, "that maybe the rain was going to give us some other relief than the clearing up of the air."

"Such as what?" I asked, humoring him.

"Oh! I don't know," he said, "I was hoping maybe that we would be able to see, if the air cleared up enough."

"I'm afraid to do any hoping along that line," I replied, "but there may be something in it."

We dropped it for the time and attempted another meal from the same inevitable source. Partridge seemed actually to relish it and said so. His high spirits were a complete change from his other mood, and on Helen I could see they made quite a favorable impression. She entered into his mood with enthusiasm. She even consented to sing a song or two at his request. It was in the middle of one of her most beautiful songs that Partridge, without the slightest warning, went stark mad. He stood up and began to run wildly about the room, shrieking at the top of his lungs. Blood-curdling yells, and the most horrible oaths that I had ever heard uttered by a man came from him, in a torrent. I sprang to where Helen was seated at the piano and grabbed her. We made our way

A NEW HORROR

to the door and opened it quietly. I was fearful that he might in his mad frenzy attack us and I did not feel equal to an encounter. I closed the door behind us and turned the key in the lock. We stood outside, listening.

We could hear his voice raised high, in its awful incoherent jabbering. His mind had cracked completely. Of that there couldn't be the slightest doubt. We decided to spend the night out of doors.

"It seems cruel to leave him," I said to Helen, "but there is nothing we can do for him."

"No! David," she said, significantly, "there is nothing we can do for anyone but ourselves."

"Until tomorrow," I said. I could feel a shudder pass over her.

She knew what I meant. She was the bravest woman I had ever known.

CHAPTER VII

When Sight Returned

HELEN and I spent the first part of the night in the Park. At midnight, or about that time, I felt chilled. The humidity of the previous days had entirely gone after the drenching rain and the air had remained cool and clear. This was an intense relief, but, like everything else, it meant little in our life. Our minds were too occupied to give attention to anything. Concentration now seemed to center upon the whole tragedy, and all minor happenings merely registered for a brief moment and were gone.

Helen was lying a few feet from me. I had wrapped her up in my coat. I stepped over and woke her.

"What is it, David?" she asked.

"It is very chilly, my dear," I said. "I think it might be well to go back to the apartment for the rest of the night."

"How about Partridge?" she inquired.

"His delirium may have passed," I suggested.

"We can make sure before we go in."

"Very well, David," she said. So I assisted her

WHEN SIGHT RETURNED

to her feet. I felt her tremble in my arms and I knew that it wasn't the cold air. Monotonous food, a dull routine of wild mental speculations, the knowledge that death was mowing down humanity everywhere, the lurking fear that insanity was creeping upon us; all these things had been wearing her down, slowly but surely toward nervous exhaustion.

"I'm very weak, David," she said.

"I am not any too strong myself," I replied, trying to give a brightness to my words.

"You have shown marvelous strength and courage, dear," she said, clinging to me affectionately, "but I feel that I have made it harder for you."

"Don't say such a thing, my love!" I commanded. "If it were not that you had been with me during these terrible days, I would be with the millions of others who have already gone."

"It is so sweet of you to say it, David." She held her cheek against mine and drew her marvelous hand across my face. I had neglected to shave and a soft fuzzy beard had grown.

"To think, my dear," she said, plaintively, "that I must die and never see my wonderful David."

I didn't say anything. My heart was too full for words. I just stood and hoped that she would

BLIND

go on. I had forgotten everything else except that this woman and I were to go into eternity together and, strange though it may sound, I felt a peace and contentment that I will not attempt to describe.

"Tomorrow, David," she said, "we will start on our endless journey."

"Tomorrow, Helen, my own." I held her tightly, while she whispered over and over again, "I love you, David. I shall love you throughout all the ages."

We made our way back to my rooms. Just before we entered the street door I inadvertently looked up to the sky. Why I did so, I can't explain. But I thought I detected a bright spot. My heart gave a jump and I clutched Helen's hand convulsively.

"What is it, dear?" she said, having learned to respond to every pressure of my hand.

"Nothing, Helen," I answered evasively, while my heart was beating at a terrific speed. "I almost forgot the step."

My mind was now burning up. I was shaking between two fearful quandaries. I was wondering if I had really seen a light in the sky or whether it was a new kind of mental chimera that had roused my optic nerve even in the blackness of night. Hurriedly, I urged Helen inside the door.

WHEN SIGHT RETURNED

"Tell me, David," she said. "What is the matter? You are trembling."

"It's nothing, dear," I replied, trying to control my agitation. "I must have been out too long in the cold air."

"It will soon be over, David," she said, consolingly. "You have been superb, so far. Please don't give up now."

But even as she talked, my brain was reeling. What if I had really seen a star? What if sight had returned? What would it mean?

I realized that I mustn't tell Helen. I must keep it from her. If it wasn't true it would be more horrible than anything we had been through—to think that sight was to return and to find out that it was only an hallucination. If it were true, and I was the one? What a fearful thing to contemplate? I, with my sight restored and my beautiful Helen forever blind. These are just a few of the countless thoughts that flashed through my mind.

I decided that I must have time to think. I mustn't do anything that would let Helen know. I must keep myself well in hand. I prayed for mental strength and balance. All the time there was the surging hope that I couldn't suppress that maybe it was true and that Helen, too, might have seen the star had she looked up. I must find out, alone, in my own way.

BLIND

With all these spasmodic flashes pounding in my brain, I went up the two flights to my rooms. We listened but heard no sound of Partridge. I decided to take a chance and we entered the apartment, very quietly. Hardly had we stepped inside before we were greeted by our guest.

"That you, MacKenzie?" I noted, with satisfaction, that he spoke rationally.

"Yes, Partridge," I replied. "How are you feeling?"

"Much better, thank you," he said, weakly, "but I guess I'm about done for. I fell and hurt my side. It pains me terribly."

Helen and I went to him. He was on the couch. I felt of his side and of his ribs, deciding that it was only a severe wrench.

"Had anything to eat?" I asked him.

"Nothing since you folks went out," he answered. "I'm afraid I'm not much good around here. I can't even find the food, much less open the cans."

"Let me continue to do the cooking," I said, having an idea in mind. "I'll have something ready for both of you very soon."

I asked Helen to lie down and, as usual, she obeyed me without question. I then went into the kitchen and closed the door tightly. Then I went to where I kept the matches. My hands were

WHEN SIGHT RETURNED

trembling so that I dropped a match onto the floor in my nervousness. I finally struck a match on the side of the box and as it glowed I saw the light as naturally as though I had never been blind.

"It's true!" I said to myself in bewildered ecstasy. "It's true, I can see!" I knew that this was no delusion. My sight had come back. Then I began to speculate as to whether Helen's glorious eyes were once again to see. What if I was the only one? Over and over this new problem revolved itself in my mind.

Then it came to me that it would be very easy to find out if Helen could see. All I need do was keep quiet, and show her the flame in the little brimstone heater. I needn't let her know that I could see it. I lighted the wick and put some coffee and water into the percolator.

I opened the door and went into the living room.

"Coffee will be ready in a few minutes, Partridge," I said, and try as I might, I couldn't keep a note of jubilation out of my voice. I then stood at the door leading into Helen's room.

"Can you come to the kitchen, without inconvenience, my dear?" I asked her.

"Certainly, David," she answered. "I wanted to be with you."

The room was pitch black. I figured that there

BLIND

was no moon and that the star I had seen was one from which the clouds had brushed. Helen came to me and we went to the kitchen, hand in hand.

As we entered the kitchen, I could see the little flame gleaming under the percolator. Helen's hand gave mine a sudden grip. I said nothing, as it may have had no real significance.

"David!" she said, very quietly.

"Yes, dear," I replied, as if everything was usual.

"I am going to ask you a very foolish question," she said. "Please don't think it silly."

"Nothing can be silly, my dear, when you say it," I assured her.

"Tell me, David," she said, and her voice was very tense, "if your eyesight suddenly came back and you thought that I would always be blind, would you tell me?"

"Why did you ask me such a question, dear?" I asked her, a great hope coming into my heart.

"I just wanted to know, dear, that's all. I don't think I would want to go on living, if I could see and my David were always to be blind."

"You know, dear," I said to her, "I wouldn't want to live, with sight in my eyes, if you were blind."

The words must have conveyed the meaning to her that I didn't dare put into more direct form.

WHEN SIGHT RETURNED

Both of us were in the same terrible predicament. Each wanted to tell the other but only when sure that the other could be told. I waited. The awfulness of making a mistake made me overcautious. Maybe Helen was merely voicing her intuition while I was dealing with facts.

"Was that all, dear?" I asked, gently.

"Tell me, David," she said, "did you see a star tonight?" Her voice suggested a groping for a safe mental plane.

"Why, Helen, how could I see a star?"

"You could see one as well as I could," she replied, with deep significance.

No reader can possibly grasp the overpowering feeling that was on me. I decided that I couldn't wait a second longer.

"If you could see a star, Helen, you certainly can see that little flame under the percolator."

"David!" she cried, bursting into tears.

"Helen!" I answered, holding her tightly.

There we stood, in a room as black as night could make it and looked across at a tiny glowing flame of bluish light and knew that we were no longer blind.

After feeding Partridge and getting him comfortable for the balance of the night, Helen and I went out onto the street. Clouds had passed over, leaving a subdued starlight. We looked up into

BLIND

the measureless spaces of the universe. As we walked, we saw the ravages of the tragedy. On every hand were piled up wrecks of automobiles and planes. They filled the streets and were strewn along the sidewalks. The odors were almost unbearable. Even the rain had failed to clean things completely. And yet, with all this endless destruction, hope was high in our hearts.

We could see. There was work to do. We began to make plans for the coming day.

CHAPTER VIII

With Eyes That Could See

HELEN and I returned to my rooms at the first indication that the sun was on its way. Unkempt as I was and with a general disarray in my dress such as I had never shown before in my life, I still felt an exaltation bordering on spiritual frenzy. Although no longer needing my hand to guide her, Helen clung even more closely to me than ever. I noticed it with satisfaction. In the dim starlight her face and form had taken on an ethereal sweetness and charm such as I never had seen. In spite of the rigors of the twenty appalling days through which she had passed, she was now a radiant creature—reborn into a world that had been dying but which was to live again.

We stood at the entrance to the Melvin. To the east we could now see the first rays of the sun. The white-gold light made Helen to appear set in a sort of glorified frame as though she were some angelic figure from the hand of a great artist. Hatless, her one dress frayed and torn with the ravages of wear, her hair a mass of chestnut waves, without a trace of artificial coloring, her

BLIND

classic features pale and slightly drawn, there was about her, as her eyes looked into mine, a supernatural beauty such as I may only hope to convey in these weak and expressionless words.

"David," she said, looking off into the glowing east, "the sun is coming to us and we can see it. Isn't it wonderful?"

I didn't answer. It was too overwhelming to understand. Helen looked at me for just a moment. Then she silently took my hand and we knelt together on the steps. With our faces reverently to the east, we gave thanks to the creator of the universe.

When I stood again, I felt within me the urge to give myself to the task of reconstructing the world. Already, with the significance of the renewal of sight in my mind, I felt a strange and overpowering responsibility. It required no imagination to know that daylight meant an opportunity for all men to work and serve such as had never come to men in all history. I realized that the problem of making the world a fit place for those who were still living was to be far greater than had been the task of keeping it fit for those who had been living twenty days before. This may sound incongruous but it was tragically so as later events proved most positively.

We went up to the apartment and found it nec-

WITH EYES THAT COULD SEE

essary to wake Partridge. He was sleeping, very soundly. I decided that we would determine if his eyesight had been restored before telling him regarding ourselves. It had occurred to me that some people might continue blind. If that were so, I was already planning a scientific investigation into the cause of the first blindness and also try to unravel the equally mysterious cause for the sudden restoration of our sight. But those matters didn't require any research, at least not at this time. Partridge opened his heavy eyes in response to my call but the moment he did so, he let out a cry of joy. I knew, at once, that he could see the faint light that was coming into the rooms. He looked at me, strangely, evidently to see if I was in the same condition as himself.

"Thank God, Partridge! I guess everybody's sight has come back," I said.

"I only hope it stays," was his comment.

We went at our morning duties with vigor. Helen was given first opportunity to prepare her toilet, with eyes that could see, while Partridge and I arranged an early breakfast, finding foods that we didn't know were in our stock. Helen joined us shortly, her hair now done up into a most fetching coil, her face gleaming, her eyes shining gladly and her one dress pulled together so cleverly that all signs of wear and tear were

BLIND

gone. To think that so magnificently radiant a human being was still living after the dark days through which we had passed, made me speechless with wonder.

Partridge looked at her and gasped. He was nervous and demonstrative at the same time—often an unhappy combination.

“Pardon my saying so, Miss Reynolds,” he said enthusiastically, “but you look so beautiful that I can’t help remarking on it.” He hung his head as if he were ashamed of his enthusiasm. I looked at Helen. She smiled at me first, then turned to Partridge.

“Thank you, Mr. Partridge,” she said, sweetly, “I think that we will see everything with far different eyes, from now.” In what she said I saw a great new philosophy. The world would certainly see with new eyes—new vision. Maybe we would see our fellow creatures in a new light.

We finished our breakfast in haste. Somehow food, even though we were able to cook it in a way to break the monotony of the past days meant nothing to us this morning, yet, only the day before, it was all important. It is strange how, in the most extraordinary circumstances the same vagaries of human inconsistency seems to obtain.

Partridge and I did our best to improve our sadly neglected appearances. I loaned him my

WITH EYES THAT COULD SEE

razor, the use of which he sorely needed. His straggly hair couldn't be made very presentable but the removal of his three weeks' growth of beard certainly made a changed man of him. He helped himself generously from my wardrobe and when he finally appeared I hardly knew him for the man of an hour before. For reasons that I knew would develop just as soon as we came into contact with other survivors of the tragedy, I made a most elaborate effort to put my personal appearance on as near a plane to what it had been before, as was possible. While Helen and Partridge did what they could in cleaning up the litter that had piled up in the kitchen, I deliberately went at the problem of eliminating so far as possible the effects of the physical and mental ordeal through which I had passed. Smoothly shaven and with a complete change in wardrobe, fresh linen and tie, I presented myself to my two guests, a few minutes later, as a new man.

I was pleased to see the smile of evident approval that came over the face of Helen. What Partridge said escapes me but I recall that it convinced me that I was working along the right line. As a reader of a historical story, you may feel that I am laying too much stress on an apparently unimportant matter and yet I had already conceived the idea in my mind that outward physical

BLIND

appearance was to be a very determining factor in the question of leadership in the first hours. We would be total strangers to the rest of the survivors. Someone must assume leadership. I had determined that this was to be my job. Knowing that I would not feel like accepting as a leader one who had been defeated and as the only evidence of victory that any man could offer to strangers was his outward appearance, I had decided to make an appeal to others such as they might make to me. My mirror had told me that I was pale and that my face was haggard, but aside from that, I knew I had the appearance of a man who had successfully passed through this great crisis. I showed that I still retained the full powers of my mind.

I looked at the clock. It was exactly seven. Helen and Partridge, just a bit tired after their efforts, had sat down on the couch in the living room.

"Well, Helen," I said, "what do you say if we go on a little shopping tour?"

Both she and Partridge looked at me, surprised.

"Why not?" I insisted. "If my theory is correct, the stores along the Avenue are as free as air. In fact, my friends, if the mortality has been as awful as I estimate it must have been, the piled-up wealth of a hundred and seventy millions of

WITH EYES THAT COULD SEE

people now belongs to the survivors and I doubt if there are ten millions left in America."

Partridge looked at me, queerly.

"I'm all twisted in my mind, MacKenzie," he said. "Do you mean to say that there are only ten million people left in America?"

"I am afraid to estimate it," I said. "I only know that nothing but merest chance saved you and Miss Reynolds and myself from starvation or death in some other form. We have been so taken up with the simple problem of getting enough food that we have given no real thought to the disaster, itself. How far it reaches, I can't tell. All I know is that except for others even more helpless than ourselves, I have come into contact with nobody who escaped the blindness. I only hope that millions lived through it and that like ourselves their sight has been restored."

Partridge still looked puzzled.

"But if everything is going to be free and all we have to do is go out and get it, nobody will have to work any more."

I looked at him. Helen was watching me, closely. I felt strangely lifted out of myself. I could see this childish selfishness that Partridge was voicing translated into an irrepressible anarchy, a wave of ruthless lawlessness that would wipe out what might still remain of civilization.

BLIND

I spoke slowly. I was outlining the needs of the hour as I viewed them, with only a theory on which to base my argument.

"My friends," I said. "If the tragedy through which we have passed has taken the toll I fear, then life, for those who remain on earth will be a struggle far more difficult than it was a century and a half ago.

"Every sense of values must go. Money has been demonetized for the first time. The only things of recognized value in our life for years to come, at least, will be health, food, clothing and character."

I could see that Partridge was beginning to get a hold upon the problems that faced us. I continued.

"Within two hours, if there are other living people in this neighborhood, I shall have a headquarters established for the purpose of stopping the spread of disease, for helping in the distribution of food, and for apportioning the allotment of work among those who can work."

As I talked, I gained in strength of purpose. I seemed to grasp the problems of the hour even before I had come into contact with them.

"Every social standard that has grown up among the people of the world will have to be readjusted to our new conditions. Money, as a

WITH EYES THAT COULD SEE

medium of exchange, will have to be abandoned. It doesn't mean anything, if I am right in my estimate."

"How are we going to divide things? That's the question to decide." Partridge put this problem before me as though it were a hard one to meet. In my mind's eye, I was already facing infinitely more difficult questions than this simple one of pure economic relations. But even before I could put my answer into words, Helen stood up and crossed over to my side.

"Please don't put those silly questions, Mr. Partridge," she said. "Don't you see that these matters are to be decided for us by men of genius. Mr. MacKenzie has already saved you from the real tragedy. He will now save you from yourself, but you must follow him, without question."

With his sight restored and with two apparently normal people in front of him and with no real knowledge of the utter chaos in our social and economic structure, Partridge's viewpoint was not to be wondered at. He was totally lacking in imagination.

"Do you mean to say that I must follow MacKenzie's lead, blindly?" He put the question to Helen and from the tone in his voice, I could detect just a bit of resentful irritation.

"Not 'blindly,' Mr. Partridge. You must follow

BLIND

him with your eyes open—I mean the eyes of your mind. The world has been blind to men like David altogether too long.” Helen’s tone carried a conviction that Partridge couldn’t ignore.

“I’m awfully sorry, Miss Reynolds,” he said, “but I never heard of Mr. MacKenzie until I stumbled across him a few days ago. Who is he?”

Helen turned to me, admiringly. For a moment, I felt embarrassed and then I became a detached piece of humanity, a sort of exhibit, to be treated as a subject for discussion.

Helen put her hand on my shoulder. I stood as one about to receive a benediction.

“David Glenn MacKenzie is one of the world’s intellectuals, Mr. Partridge,” she said, the amber purity of her voice lending to her words a dignity far above their cold meaning. “Within the next five years, his work will place him among the immortals.”

Partridge smiled a kind of sickly smile. “I guess I’m outclassed, Miss Reynolds. I’d like to get through to my family in Newark, if I could.” . . . His voice broke. Tears came into his eyes.

“Then,” he continued bravely, “I’ll come back and help all I can.”

Helen crossed to him and put her hands on his shoulders.

“That’s the spirit, Mr. Partridge. The eyes of

WITH EYES THAT COULD SEE

the world are opened, at last." She turned to me as if for encouragement.

"That is right, my dear, opened to the ways of service. All the dreams of all the philosophers are come true. With eyes that see, we must build a new civilization."

Partridge asked to be excused and went into the room that I had been using as sleeping quarters. Helen and I went to the front window. The light from the rising sun was flooding the world.

From a large apartment across from the Melvin, we saw a man stagger. He tried to walk, but fell onto the sidewalk in a faint.

"Work, my dear," I said, turning to Helen.

We hurried down and across the street. An overturned automobile of very expensive make was lying at the curb. The decaying body of the chauffeur was buried beneath it.

We helped the fallen man to his feet. He was reduced almost to a skeleton. As I looked closely at him, I thought I recognized him, in spite of his emaciated and dishevelled condition.

"Who is it?" asked Helen, as we held him between us and assisted him across to my apartment.

"Henry Salzman, the big real estate man, I think. He's worth a hundred million."

"He would give all his holdings for a good meal," said Helen.

BLIND

"And if it was the last food in sight, he couldn't buy it, even for that staggering price. All he could hope was that the one who owned it might share it with him, freely."

"What good is all his money, today?" asked Helen.

"It isn't even worth talking about," I said, putting a ring of finality into my voice.

We had practically carried him up to my rooms. We placed him on the couch and Helen went after a glass of water.

Partridge heard us and came from the room where he had gone, evidently just to be alone.

He looked at Salzman, who was a small man at best, and was reduced so that he appeared almost insignificant.

"Do you know who he is?" he asked.

"Yes! I knew him slightly. He is Henry Salzman. He is worth a hundred million in New York real estate."

"Was, you mean," replied Partridge.

"Correct, Partridge," I said. "Today, his holdings are of no value. He isn't any richer than you or I."

"Not so rich, MacKenzie. We, at least, have got some of our strength, but he looks as if he was nearly dead."

WITH EYES THAT COULD SEE

Slowly but surely the great changes in our social government were being manifested.

A few minutes later, Salzman opened his eyes. He tried to talk. Helen had warmed some evaporated cream and he drank it, greedily. I leaned over him as he whispered.

"I'm Henry Salzman," I heard him say. "I wish you would find my wife. I can't find her, anywhere." Then he fainted again. I told Helen and Partridge what he had said. Thus they realized how unimportant and useless wealth had become in the scheme of the world. Here was a man who could have stirred the entire City of New York into action, twenty-one days before and yet he had almost starved to death. Now he was asking for his wife and depending for aid on three strangers to whom his money and position made not the slightest appeal. What we might do for him, was something he could not buy and surely couldn't pay for.

Leaving Partridge in care of him, Helen and I started for the Avenue to map out the work for the day.

CHAPTER IX

The First Day of Sight

IT was just eight o'clock when I asked Helen to accompany me on our first trip into the new world. I asked Partridge if he would wait around for a short time, with Salzman, and when he decided it was safe to leave him he could start for Newark.

"How will I get there?" he asked.

"There are forty million automobiles in the country," I replied, "and any one of them is as much yours as it is anybody's. Your real trouble is not in having transportation, but in being able to use it."

"How is that?" he asked, perplexed.

"From what I have already seen," I said, "the roads of the entire country are littered with wrecks. I doubt if you will find a quarter of a mile of passable highway at any one place between here and Newark."

"Then I'll walk!" he replied.

Helen and I went downstairs and stepped into the street. We took a look in either direction. I was prepared for what I saw but to Helen the

THE FIRST DAY OF SIGHT

shock still had to be absorbed. She shuddered, as she turned to me.

"Am I seeing things as they are, David?" she asked, pleadingly.

"My dear," I said to her, consolingly, "what we see here is nothing to the chaos that we shall see in the entire city. These few wrecks of machines and the neglected bodies of what were human beings a few days ago, are merely typical of the utter ruin and death that surrounds us on every side."

"How can you be so calm about it?" she asked, paying me the compliment of sanity, if nothing more.

"Somebody must remain calm, my dear," I told her, "and I have accepted that assignment not only for myself, but for you. I am depending on your help."

"I shall do my best," she said, firmly.

"We shall go straight to the Plaza," I said. "It is as good a central point as any. We can stop at one of the gown shops on the way and you can select a dress. There will be no one to wait on you, but the gowns will be there. I want you to look your best."

We worked our way around the twisted wrecks of machines, some of them covered with dried blood, many of them overrun with huge rats, some

BLIND

of them half consumed by the fires that their engines had created when the crash had come. I do not wish to depict the horror of the dead bodies that we were obliged to look at. Any real story of a civilized war would be more appalling, especially as war has always been needless, but the carnage we were witnessing couldn't have been avoided.

We stepped into the wide open door of a very fashionable gown shop. It was deserted, except for an occasional gray mouse or rat that scampered over the floor or through the cases. Dust, smoke, soot was over everything. Helen rummaged behind the cases until she found a summer dress that pleased her. I waited while she stepped into one of the empty dressing rooms. She came out, a few minutes later looking fresh and alluring. From another case she selected a stylish hat and we were ready for the day's work.

Up to this moment, we had been walking in a deserted village. We crossed the Avenue and into the open space in front of the magnificent new Plaza Hotel that had taken the place of the old hotel. Here, except for three or four huge busses piled up in wrecks and two big planes that had crashed down in torn masses from the air, there was a place where a meeting of people might be

THE FIRST DAY OF SIGHT

held in the open. But the people were not in evidence.

Helen and I made our way almost to the entrance of the hotel before we saw signs of life. A man in shirtsleeves came around the corner. Seeing us, he waved his arms frantically. Then he staggered against the side of the hotel. We hurried to him.

As we reached him, he whispered hoarsely, "There are four people in the basement, nearly dead. I came out for help."

I left Helen with him and stepped into the side entrance. I worked my way toward the kitchen. Even as I did so, I could feel the mice in the dark running across my feet. I shouted, "Where are you?" and waited for an answer. Faintly, came a cry from a distance and I stumbled along in the corridor. I finally reached the kitchen. Without electric lights and with only a faint haze coming into the room from the heavy glass in the sidewalk, I could just make out the huddled forms of four people, three men and a woman. They were so weak that they couldn't stand. I decided to get them into the open air and lifted the woman, bodily, over my shoulder and started along the corridor. My eyes were becoming used to the dark. I finally staggered up the steps with her and laid her on the sidewalk, with Helen's other patient.

BLIND

The three men, I couldn't carry, but forced them to lean on me while I brought them, one by one, to the street.

It was a pitiable sight to see these four men and woman scaly with dirt and filth, emaciated almost to skeletons, lying helpless, in broad daylight, in front of one of the world's most magnificent hotels.

The strangeness of it all, the dire need of doing something at once, the awfulness of the task we were facing, all these things hammered away at my brain.

Helen looked at me, shaking her head, as if in doubt.

"David," she said, "I'm afraid it is too big for us. We can never get started."

"Oh! yes we can, my dear," I answered, encouragingly. "This is as good a start as any. I shall be back in a minute."

I rushed back into the kitchen and returned with two large pails of water.

"One to bathe their faces," I said. "The other to drink. I'll get some food in a little while."

I was anxious to explore this great hotel, with its thousands of rooms and get an idea of how the guests had acted or fared. I entered the great entrance on the Plaza side. But as I did so, I came back again without proceeding further. I

THE FIRST DAY OF SIGHT

couldn't stand the sight, especially in my weakened condition. It will serve no useful purpose to describe it. I merely decided that none of the big buildings in the city would be of the slightest use until they were completely fumigated and renovated. If I was to do anything for survivors, I must get them into the open air and then search for food supplies.

I went back to Helen. She was working over her five charges like a trained nurse. Already, with faces washed and their hair cleaned with fresh water, they were beginning to feel better.

"Keep them quiet, dear," I said to her. "I will go up the street a few doors and see if I can get something from one of the grocery stores."

I located a store a few doors away, on 59th Street. As I entered I saw a man piling canned goods in a basket.

"Hello, friend," I said to him, in the most casual way.

He dropped his basket, startled.

"For God's sake, Mister," he replied. "Do you know what's happened?"

"I know fairly well," I answered. "The world went blind twenty-one days ago, and recovered its sight today."

"That's right, I guess," he said, weakly. "I lost track of everything."

BLIND

"How did you manage to live through it?" I asked him.

"My wife and I have been living on this kind of stuff," he replied, pointing to the shelves. "Quite a lot of people have been coming here and getting things."

"Wife still alive?" I asked.

"Yes, but very weak," he told me.

"Well," I said, assuming an authority that I felt would be necessary for a few days, "hustle back to her as fast as you can and report to me in the Plaza, right away."

"What for?" he asked, and I determined to make a test case of it.

"Because there are thousands of people who are worse off than you and I, and it is our duty to help them."

"Duty be damned," he said. "I'm doing all I can to help myself. Let them help themselves."

I could scarcely believe my ears. I decided to go through to the finish, however, so I stepped over to him, quietly but with my mind made up.

"My friend," I said to him, "I don't know who you are and I don't care. You are stronger than many people in this city who are so helpless that they can't even walk. I have decided that the strong men and women must help the weak. I am willing to do my share. I am asking you, as man

THE FIRST DAY OF SIGHT

to man, will you come to the Plaza, with me, at once and join in the relief work?"

He looked me square in the eyes. I could see that with the use of his eyes had come a renewal of confidence in himself.

"I told you 'no,' " he said, "and I'm telling you 'no' again."

I thought of those five helpless creatures lying on the sidewalk, with no food in sight, just a few feet away and of Helen Reynolds patiently washing their filthy faces without a word of complaint, lending them encouragement with her beautiful presence and marvelous voice; a voice that only a few days before had been used to thrill and charm the music lovers of all the world. I took one look into the face of this man before me and as though impelled by some force I couldn't control, I dropped him in his tracks with my fist.

He looked up at me, and began to cry like a child.

"I'll go!" he whined. "I'll go! Don't strike me again!" His voice trailed away into an incoherent cry.

I lifted him to his feet, roughly, not the least bit sorry for what I had done.

"Fill up that basket with canned fruits!" I said to him, "and don't try to run away."

He obeyed me, sullenly. For just a moment I

BLIND

thought that I had made a serious mistake in not being more patient with him. Then I decided that there are only two kinds of appeal, anyway, the mental and the physical. Those to whom a mental appeal is effective need no other, while those who can only be stirred into action by physical force must be treated that way. Besides, time was important. Vague plans were formulating in my mind. They needed clarification. There was no time for anything but action.

We soon had two fairly large baskets filled with a selected assortment of foods that I felt would meet the pressing needs of the sickly group waiting my return at the front of the Plaza. As my new acquaintance walked along with me, I asked him his name.

"Vanderhoff!" he replied, still in a sullen mood. "Which one?" I asked, knowing that this famous family of wealthy New Yorkers was prolific.

"George Vanderhoff the Fourth, if you're so damn particular," he snapped back at me.

"Well, George," I said, deciding that I might as well try to be good-natured, "you have got a job on your hands, at last. How did you happen to be in New York on the first?"

"The yacht pulled up the river for supplies and Mrs. Vanderhoff and I came to our apartment for a few things. We intended leaving for Europe

THE FIRST DAY OF SIGHT

the next morning. What's your name?" he asked, as if suddenly interested.

"David Glenn MacKenzie," I answered.

"The writer?" he inquired.

I nodded.

"Well! MacKenzie," he said, rather contritely, "I don't know what it's all about. I've been living like a Salamander grubbing for food in the dark, half crazed at times, with my wife one day hopeful and the next in the depths of despair, no phone, no light, no radio, no servants, no milk, no anything." His voice broke.

"Everybody on earth has been the same, unless I am mistaken," I answered. "It is going to take days before we will have even the remotest realization of what has happened to humanity."

"And then what?" he inquired, expectantly.

"Then you and I and the men and women who have retained their sanity must set about the task of establishing order."

We were just turning the corner. Vanderhoff hesitated, just a moment, and then turned to me, almost pleadingly.

"MacKenzie," he said, "I want you to have the right impression about me. I wasn't normal, a few minutes ago. This little talk with a man who seems to grasp what has been going on has cleared my brain. I'm sorry for the way I acted. Tell me

BLIND

just what you want done and, after that, I wish you would let me go after Mrs. Vanderhoff. She's waiting for me, all alone."

I looked him straight in the eye.

"We'll get along, Vanderhoff," I said, quietly, "now that we really understand each other. I'll only keep you a few minutes."

Helen's patients were sitting up and looking quite cheerful as we joined them. I introduced Vanderhoff. He looked at Helen, intently.

"I heard you in your last concert in London, Miss Reynolds," he said. "You have survived this terrible tragedy, wonderfully well."

Helen smiled and looked at me.

"Mr. MacKenzie has been with me during the entire time." To her that seemed to be the only explanation necessary.

"Here," I said, not sharply, but firmly. "We must avoid reminiscences or we will never get started. Will you go to Vanderhoff's apartment, Helen, and help him to bring Mrs. Vanderhoff. We will be able to treat everybody much better if we have them all in one spot."

"Anything else?" asked Vanderhoff, as they started to go.

"Can you drive a motor truck?" I asked him.

"I certainly can."

"Then," I said, "I would like to have you drive

THE FIRST DAY OF SIGHT

over one of the fire engines from the station on 59th Street.

"I'll have it here inside of ten minutes if it can get through the wrecks," he assured me. Helen left with him.

I turned to the five emaciated human wrecks and gave them some of the fruits from cans I had brought, and promised them some real food later.

A group of a half dozen heavy-footed people came across the Plaza. A man and woman, with four children, made up the party. They seemed just about able to walk, but managed to reach us.

Not a word was said. I simply invited them to join us. All seemed mentally dazed. One of the children, a girl of about eight years was terribly bitten about the face. It was bleeding, profusely and she was making no effort to stop it.

"What happened, my dear?" I asked her, while giving her some fruit juices.

"Rats bit her," said the father. "They are terrible out there." He pointed toward the East Side. "Fought 'em all the time the last few days."

I rushed into the basement of the Plaza for a couple more pails of water. As I went along the dark corridor, I was trying to formulate some plan that would revive the spirits of these terrible cases of depression.

Disease and vermin were everywhere. Rats

BLIND

were about to spread it from now on. With vast stores of food, unprotected, with millions of bodies on which to feed, with no organized plan to stop their multiplying into the billions, it would be only a few more weeks when the rats would dominate the world.

I filled the two pails with water, thankful that this heaven-sent supply was still coming through from the Adirondacks. As I started back, I heard the clang of a fire engine. I couldn't help but smile to myself.

Vanderhoff wanted me to know that he was carrying out orders.

"There is still hope," I thought to myself. "When one of New York's petted young sons is willing to go to work, there certainly is hope for the world."

As I reached the sidewalk, I saw the fire engine coming into the Plaza. Vanderhoff on the high seat, and Helen sitting on the running board, holding a young woman in her arms. The bell was clanging in a way to wake up the neighborhood for ten blocks in every direction.

CHAPTER X

First News From Outside

BY eleven o'clock there were nearly a thousand people in the Plaza. Some mechanical genius had worked on the fountain until it was sending up a stream of fresh water. Continually the siren whistle and the bell on the fire engine were blown or clanged by Vanderhoff and a couple of boys who had shown up from somewhere. Nothing was definite. I had rushed a semblance of office into shape, with desks, tables, typewriters and a very pale young girl who asked me if she could help as a typist was banging out orders of various kinds on Plaza Hotel paper, of which I had managed to get a supply.

The feed hose on the steamer had been attached to a hydrant and an engineer who seemed to know his business had started the engine to pumping streams of water in various directions to allay the heat of the day, and keep the atmosphere clear. I was surprised to see how readily the gathering accepted me as the one to obey. I had always advanced the theory that real leadership, stripped of every other motivation, was a mere matter of

BLIND

mental assumption. I assumed to be the leader in this crisis, and it hadn't been disputed since my early-morning clash with Vanderhoff.

Helen had established a sort of relief headquarters of her own, getting woman after woman to help her. The sights were heart-rending and yet, through it all, I thought I could see hope. I refused, absolutely, to let anybody talk about his or her experiences. I saw, early, that if we all began to tell our troubles, we would never get away from chaos.

The siren whistle was evidently attracting the attention of survivors able to walk to the Plaza, so I delegated Vanderhoff to find two or three drivers to get other engines and see if they could force a lane along Fifth Avenue in both directions. I was hoping to establish clear lanes north and south, intending to use Central Park as an open-air hospital and feeding place for those who couldn't help themselves. While not parading my fears to anybody, I kept thinking of the need for immediate action. The atmosphere was so foul from various causes that it was beginning to be almost unbearable.

"If I could only have two full days' start, and a crew of men," I kept repeating in my mind, knowing, of course, that the only help available was the help that must be developed from the

FIRST NEWS FROM OUTSIDE

emaciated, unkempt and spiritless mob that was slowly gathering at the call of the siren whistle. I knew, instinctively, that there must be no let-up in our apparent activity. It would be fatal to let even one of these survivors think that I was in the slightest degree worried over the ultimate outcome. So I kept issuing orders, written or spoken, to men and women alike. Some men, I placed in charge of small groups with definite instructions as to clearing the Avenue, others I sent to the grocery stores for supplies and others were sent in search of survivors. One man, whose name I didn't even try to ascertain, I sent to the Cathedral, with instructions to ring the chimes, no matter how he did it.

It was about 11:30 that I looked up, quite by accident, and saw a big plane coming from the northeast. My heart leaped into my throat. Here was the first word from the outside world. Strange as it may appear in print, my mental attitude toward the condition of myself and those surrounding me in the great Plaza near the entrance to New York's Central Park, was that we were on an island. I couldn't seem to get that impression out of my mind. To see a big plane coming toward the city was, to me, the same sensation as might come over a shipwrecked sailor on a barren island. And yet these remnants of humanity and myself

BLIND

were, at that very moment, in what was considered the very center of the civilized activity of all the world. Others had now seen the approaching plane and all activity ceased. We waited, wondering where it would take landing. Helen came and stood near me.

"Where do you think it is from?" she asked.

"Hard to guess. Hartford, New Haven, Boston," I replied. "It confirms my theory, however, that sight has returned everywhere."

The plane, which was a standard sixty-passenger express monoplane, circled over the Plaza and then landed on the airdrome on the top of the hotel.

"I'm sorry for him," I said to Helen. "He will be at least a half hour getting down through the hotel, unless he takes to the fire escapes. We'll have to wait."

But even as I said it, the plane had made a new take-off and was circling down toward the edge of the Park, looking for a clear spot.

"That man knows his business, my dear," I said to Helen. "Let's go over and meet him." He had made a perfect drop landing, using his upright controls and was alighting from the plane just as we reached there. I expected to see a grizzled veteran of the air, but instead a lad of scarcely eighteen years, came toward us. As he walked,

FIRST NEWS FROM OUTSIDE

I could see that he was very weak. He reeled as I took him by the hand and I caught him in my arms.

"Where from, friend?" I asked.

"Boston. I'm a 'Tech' man," he said.

"I lectured there, years ago, on economics," I told him. "Welcome to New York."

"Isn't it ghastly?" he said. "Have you figured it out, at all?"

"Just theory," I said. "Everybody on earth went blind August 1st. Our eyesight came back, today. You are the first man from outside who has come into New York in the last twenty-one days."

"Who is in charge of the city?" he asked. "Most of the officials are dead, in Boston. A young pal of mine at 'Tech' was running things when I left, three hours ago. He sent me over for some ratacid. I've got to go right back after I get it. It's hell over there on account of the rats."

"Ratacid?" I repeated, just vaguely recalling some such chemical.

"Yes, sir," he said. "It is a new chemical that mixes about a thousand to one with water. It is used by all the health boards everywhere in killing rats."

"Have you any idea where the supplies are?" I asked him.

"At the Universal Drug Company warerooms,"

BLIND

he said. "Their plant was burned down in Boston, some time during the blindness."

I had presented him as a young "Tech" student to Helen and to Vanderhoff, who had joined us. The others, I paid no attention to. There was no time for long stories.

I consulted a telephone book and found that the Universal Drug Company had uptown warerooms at 76th Street, off Riverside Drive. I delegated a big truck to try to go through the Park and across, with five men to assist him.

"Bring back a few drums of it for us if you can get through," I said, "and good luck to you."

They piled into the truck and started. I turned to Helen and we went back toward the Plaza.

"A hundred boys like that and I would have New York fit for humanity in ten days," I said.

Just as we reached the Plaza, a jangle of discordant sounds smote the air.

Helen looked at me, in surprise.

"What does that mean?" she inquired.

"The chimes in the Cathedral," I said, smiling at her surprise. "I sent a man over to rouse the populace."

"You think of everything, don't you, David?" she asked, lovingly.

"I think everything of you, dear heart," I said.

We went back to work, with new vigor. I sent a

FIRST NEWS FROM OUTSIDE

boy down to the Cathedral to tell people to come to the Plaza. Others I stationed at intersecting streets. I had already sent two men to hospitals fronting on the Park to determine if they could be made ready to treat some of our worst cases. New people were coming up in an endless stream. They might be millionaires or paupers. Physically, they all looked alike.

Patiently, the men in charge of the food supplies were piling up cases in tiers. If only we could get some fresh milk, or fresh vegetables. I saw that one man had located a store of potatoes and another had piled up hundreds of pounds of chocolate candy. We were lacking only in a few things but they seemed to be the most essential.

At one o'clock, I called a halt on all activities. Getting into an open truck, I summoned all those together who were at all active and made an address, explaining what I hoped to do with their help. I outlined the general condition of things and pointed out a few of the anomalies of the economic situation.

"Money isn't worth anything, any longer," I said. "From today and for many years to come, money will mean absolutely nothing to anybody. The banks are filled with money, they are wide open. They have been wide open for twenty-one days, night and day. Not a dollar has been

BLIND

touched. Nobody wants it. Today, as I am talking to you, there is enough money lying unprotected in the open banks, large stores and corporation safes to make every man, woman and child still living in Greater New York, a millionaire. Nobody wants it. All that we want is to rid the city of filth, disease, rats and vermin, and then try to start life all over again, with everybody on an equal basis."

They seemed to grasp my meaning but only in a dull sort of way. I could see that their minds had not yet regained sight, even though their eyes were again behaving as normal.

"Everybody in New York can have the home of a millionaire. There will be enough food for everybody," I shouted at them. "Every woman can have a string of pearls worth, three weeks ago, fifty to one hundred thousand dollars, but there is nobody to do the work of servants in the big homes and nobody who will envy anybody her string of pearls.

"Starting now, there will be a new order of things. Every healthy person must do his full quota of work. Each man to his job and each woman to the thing she can do best. We have had just one visitor from outside of New York and it is now after one o'clock. He tells us that conditions are worse in Boston than they are here.

FIRST NEWS FROM OUTSIDE

"Think of the terrible plight that the great cities are in, and especially the greatest city on earth. For over five hours, I have been trying to get some sort of program started that will get us somewhere and this is as far as I have been able to get. Here we are, about two thousand people, many of them dying." I pointed to the long rows of suffering, nine-tenths starved, human beings, waiting patiently for somebody to minister to them. Then I went on, more to clarify things in my own mind than to expect to wake up my audience to any clear understanding of the gigantic tasks we were facing.

"I want volunteers, fifty men, at least, who will go as far as they can, this afternoon, and make as good a survey as possible up to 85th Street in one direction and to 23d Street in the other. Pick up abandoned machines along the way, but I want you all back as soon as you can get here. We must find out the approximate number of survivors, get them into the open air, start to give first aid, begin a relentless war on rats, disease, filth and establish a standard of service that everybody must render.

"Every social structure has broken down. Family life seems to have been wiped out. We shall have no time for play for weeks. Every one goes to work, starting right now. I want ten men who still have their nerve to start for Washington,

BLIND

Philadelphia, Albany, Buffalo, Pittsburg, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, Chicago and St. Louis, late this afternoon. They can take off from the 110th Street air station. If not there, we will find a station that will function.

"We will start a survey along the water fronts in the morning. We can use motor boats and get supplies across to New Jersey and along the Sound into Connecticut. Our lines of commutation for several weeks will be water and air.

"I doubt if any of the big telephone or telegraph lines can be gotten into shape for months. If there is a radio engineer in the group I would like to talk with him during the afternoon. It would be a wonderful thing if we could start broadcasting from New York ahead of any city. I mean that it would be worth more to the country. It would brace them up if they felt that New York was really trying to function as a city.

"I shall expect the hearty co-operation of everybody. We have no rules of conduct except as we make them, no police force, no magistrates, no courts, no army to carry out anybody's decrees. I shall formulate an administrative plan, by tomorrow. Am I to have your support?"

A tall, ungainly man who hadn't said a word since he joined the group, stepped forward.

"Mr. Speaker," he said, in a very earnest voice,

FIRST NEWS FROM OUTSIDE

"I don't know who you are and I don't care. I've been living in hell for three weeks or so. I didn't expect to see a sane person left on earth, as I started out, this morning. In fact, I wouldn't have started if it hadn't been for the chimes. I've heard every word you said and I agree with you that we've all got to go to work. Tell me what you want me to do and tell the others. The first man who refuses to do what he is told can be turned over to me. I'll take care of him."

Somebody started to cheer in a faint sort of way, but I stopped it, at once. I didn't want that kind of co-operation. I wanted it, without compulsion, if possible. I thanked this new figure and then explained that I didn't expect anybody to agree to every suggestion I made, but that I did want everybody to agree to the one proposition we all could understand, and that was a full, unselfish and enthusiastic merging of individual interests into the general welfare of the whole community.

"To get this thought instilled into the mind of everyone is our first great mental task. Our physical and practical problems will come more or less automatically. Therefore, everybody who has an idea, bring it to me. Within a few hours we have gathered about two thousand people into this open area. Other thousands are gathering all over this

BLIND

city and in other cities. Millions must be gathering all over the country. Their problems are identical with ours. Let us go to work."

I jumped down from the truck, conscious that I had set the morale of the Plaza unit in New York on a high plane. I gave directions for distributing food, such as it was, among the entire assemblage, and then buckled down to more work. Suggestions that would never have entered my mind came to me from everybody, practical, helpful and all offered in the most kindly spirit. Invariably I designated the originator of each practical idea as the one to carry it out, giving him or her full charge.

At three o'clock a regular line of ambulances was operating between the Plaza and one of the open spaces in Central Park set apart as a field hospital. Supplies were being brought from drug stores in the neighborhood. Temporary kitchens were being set up. Doctor Fred Tierney, one of the city's greatest health specialists, was in charge—giving directions from a couch. He had been brought to the Plaza by one of my men on survey, so weak that he couldn't stand. He had told me who he was and what he wanted to do. Already, I could see that he might be able to get up and around by the morning.

All this time, while I have failed to mention it,

FIRST NEWS FROM OUTSIDE

the one most distressing thing was the gaseous odor that came from decomposing flesh. It had so saturated the atmosphere for days that almost everyone had become accustomed to it. Dr. Tierney explained to me that the olfactory nerves had become so charged in nearly everybody that they had positively ceased to function, as is the case with workers in any offensive occupation.

It was about half past three that the Boston "Technology" student got back to his plane. He and his squad of helpers had managed to locate a national supply of ratacid in the wholesale warehouses of the Universal Drug Company, nearly a mile and a half away. They had cleared a way for a truck and brought two tons of it with them. As I reached the plane, they were loading it as unconcerned as if it was a few sacks of air mail.

"What's your name, young man?" I asked him. "I forgot to ask you, before."

"Dan Lynch, Mr. MacKenzie," he replied. "The men told me your name. I'm sorry I can't visit with you, but I've got to get back. I'm taking forty drums of chemicals. I could take a passenger or two if you'd like. I'm getting gas from that station." He pointed to a service station on 59th Street, from which I saw some of my company carrying gasoline.

I looked around for volunteers.

BLIND

"Two men to go with Lynch, one to Hartford and one to Providence," I shouted.

A half dozen men stepped up, and I selected two of them, making sure they were not aviators, which I needed worse than any professional type.

I instructed them as to what they were to find out, explained about the need for a supply of ratacid and told them to get somebody in each city to come to New York in a return plane, bringing news and ready to take back any needed supplies.

As they got into the plane, I told them to learn if there was any fresh milk supply in sight, anywhere. I could see that evaporated and condensed milks would soon break down the spirit of even the most stoical of the survivors. It was with a lump in my throat that I saw young Lynch wave his hand in adieu, while one of my mechanics gave his plane a whirl and the big man-made bird sailed gracefully away on its return trip to New England's metropolis.

It was after four o'clock. The heat of the day had been stifling, but no one had complained. Sweat had streaked all our faces during the entire day. I had been so occupied that I hadn't taken a real view of the entire situation. I had merely tried to get some sort of discipline into the swelling ranks of the people. Still they came, some walking, some being carried and some crawling on

FIRST NEWS FROM OUTSIDE

their hands and knees. Always somebody offered help, gave a few words of explanation. If I had not been a personal witness of the entire proceeding, I would never have believed it possible that so much order could be obtained out of such surroundings and under such terrible circumstances.

Men and women, ready to drop in their tracks, kept on with their designated work. I could only liken them to an army of ants, working without rest, each trying to outdo the other. At six, I called another halt for a meal. What was my surprise when one of the men said that hot soups could be served to everybody. Huge cauldrons had been brought out from the kitchens of two nearby restaurants and thousands of cans of delicious soups had been made ready. Next to the hearty response that I had received from everybody along the lines of co-operation toward a community of interest, this tangible evidence that there were practical men of distinct initiative in the company, was one of the most welcome signs.

Helen had come over to me as supper was announced. We sat on magnificent plush chairs that some one had brought from the Plaza, with a large tureen of steaming soup in front of us. It was evidently the most expensive china service in the entire hotel. The crackers were delicious croutons. Solid silver salts and peppers were

BLIND

served with it and napkins that ordinarily were laid only for visiting notables.

We had been too tired even to talk. But the service that had come almost as though from the hands of an oriental genie couldn't be ignored.

"Who thought of all this?" asked Helen, who, like myself, had been so busy with her own work that she hadn't noticed the activities of others.

"Heaven only knows," I said. "Probably some chap who has been a waiter thought that it was time to show his professional skill."

"Hasn't it always been so?" she asked, philosophically.

"Unfortunately, no," I replied. "There has always been caste, pride, prejudice, each one trying to do something that was beyond him, because he felt that in so doing he lifted himself in the social scale. A million singers trying to sing like Helen Reynolds when they should have been doing some real work. The people of the world have wasted enough energy in false personal standards for centuries to have lifted the general standard of all civilization, had each one done his real work on earth."

"It will all be changed, now. I can see that," she continued.

"For awhile, yes," I replied. "Then it will all revert to the old standards again."

FIRST NEWS FROM OUTSIDE

We ate our meal, thinking deeply, especially of the long night and the great work of the days and nights to come.

"Helen, my dear, I think it would be well if you and I were married, at once. Do you wish it?"

She looked at me and smiled.

"This is so sudden, David."

I caught her into my arms.

"There is a minister, over there," I said, pointing to a little clergyman, evidently an Episcopalian.

"We will go over, now, and ask him to solemnize it."

"It is all so strange, David," she said. "But you know what is best."

It didn't take three minutes and yet the marriage of Helen Reynolds to David Glenn MacKenzie was the only wedding to take place in all New York between August 1, 1950 at noon and August 22, 1950 at sundown. This, as you know was made a matter of record in the official archives of the city.

CHAPTER XI

A Strange Honeymoon

HELEN sat with me while I took care of several matters that were coming in. I have never been able to explain the way in which everybody tried to go through with the work assigned them. I feel that I should pass along to the civilization of a century hence the outstanding fact that selfishness is an outgrowth of success and self-sacrifice is the logical result of failure. Here we were, as near helpless as it was possible for the human mind to appreciate and everybody was working, without complaint. Three weeks before, everybody in New York was doing his level best to avoid work. Our tragedy seemed to have wiped out human selfishness. By this I do not wish to convey the thought that self-preservation had been eliminated. That instinct had apparently been even more highly developed in the fearful struggle in which we had all engaged.

I gave instructions to rest during the night to all those who had been working most of the day, outlined what I would like to have done in the field hospital and listened to several reports from

A STRANGE HONEYMOON

other sections of the city. It was evident that other groups were being gotten together in various open spaces, using means similar to the ones we were employing in the Plaza unit.

Helen and I left about eight o'clock and went to my apartment at the Melvin. My work during the day had kept me so busy that I had almost forgotten Salzman, the real estate man, whom we had left in charge of Partridge. The latter hadn't shown up at the Plaza, so I assumed he had started for Newark.

It was the first time that either of us had an opportunity to see any section of the city except the Plaza itself and the Park, during the entire day. I noticed, first, that several cars along the curbing had their lights on and just before we reached the apartment I saw a young man at work on a handsome car that was standing in front.

"What's the idea?" I asked him.

"Oh! Good evening, Mr. MacKenzie," he said, politely. "I thought it wouldn't be a bad idea to have the streets lighted and this is the best way I can think of, for tonight."

"A very good plan," I assured him, and we went inside, and left him at his self-appointed task.

"Poor chap," I said to Helen, as we went up to our apartment. "He doesn't realize that there

BLIND

isn't a living soul who is using the streets, tonight, but it would have been cruel to let him think he wasn't doing something really worth while."

"Misdirected energy," said Helen.

"It has been the bane of civilization. At least, it can be curbed to a great extent from now on," I replied.

I had brought a flashlight with me and I set it on the table. On the couch, evidently sleeping, was the little real estate man.

"Our millionaire friend is tired, my dear," I said. "Tomorrow we must give him some work to do."

I crossed over and woke him up, gently. He rubbed his eyes and looked up, startled. I could see, however, that he was feeling much better than when we left him twelve hours before.

"How are you feeling, Mr. Salzman?"

"Better, Mr. MacKenzie, much better. I helped myself to your supply of food. I will get back to work, tomorrow. How are things in town?"

Helen looked at me, questioningly, but I gave her a reassuring look to indicate that the little man hadn't lost his mind. He had simply failed to grasp, in the slightest degree, the tragedy through which he had lived.

"Things are pretty bad, Salzman," I said to

A STRANGE HONEYMOON

him. "You decided not to go out, after Partridge went?"

"I was awfully tired," he replied, "and took a nap. I guess I overslept. It was quite comfortable here. You didn't hear anything about Mrs. Salzman?" This last he said suddenly, as if it had almost been forgotten.

"No!" I said. "In fact it is hard to get news about anything. There are no newspapers, all the telephone and telegraph service is dead. Every modern convenience is dead except the automobiles, airplanes and water supply. Tomorrow, I hope to get some fresh milk into the city. I've sent a man looking for it."

He was now sitting up and wide awake. He stared at me, his mind slowly beginning to grasp the significance of what I told him.

"Do you mean that everybody has been blind as long as I was?" he asked.

"Everybody in the world went blind at the same time. Of that, I'm positive. Everything goes to show that to be the fact."

"How many lived through it?" he asked.

"There is no way of estimating," I told him. "I should say, if 5 per cent of the population of the world has survived, it will be a conservative estimate."

It was my first real attempt to set an approxi-

BLIND

mate figure and it could only be a wild guess at the very best. I was trying to get a response from this man of undoubted ability that might be of value in solving the mental attitude of thousands of others. He looked at Helen and then at me, as if dazed.

"Tell me," he said, finally. "If there are only a half million people living in New York City, tonight, what good to me is all my real estate?"

"It isn't worth the price of the deeds on which your ownership is recorded," I said to him.

"Yesterday, I was worth a hundred million dollars, but I was blind." He shook his head as if in doubt. "Today I'm not worth a dollar, you tell me, but I've got my sight." He seemed to be talking to himself. "But I can't find my wife." He looked at us, helplessly, and then fell back on the couch and sobbed like a child.

While Helen tried to comfort him, I looked about the apartment. I had made up my mind that we would call this our home, for awhile, at least. Helen's home had been on 10th Street where she maintained a studio. Her parents were both dead and her only relative was a sister in Cleveland. She was waiting, anxiously, but patiently for word from there.

Suddenly, out of the air, came a voice with a

A STRANGE HONEYMOON

distinct English accent. I jumped and so did Helen.

"This is station LDX, London, England. We are anxious to get news from the rest of the world. Not a word has been received from anywhere except Paris, France, for over three weeks. Our eyesight returned this morning. Try to get into touch with us. We shall send a dirigible to New York tomorrow. . . . This is station LDX, London, England. We are anxious to get news. . . ."

I knew that it was to be a repeat, so didn't wait further. I asked Helen if she would mind if I rushed back to the Plaza. She gave her consent, with a smile. Salzman was looking at us but didn't seem to see any special significance in what we had just learned. I hurried back to the Plaza. It was practically deserted. The tired workers had evidently decided to call it a day and had joined the campers in the open spaces that we had set apart in the Park for temporary housing.

I then went to the Park. There I finally located several of my more active workers and told them that London was talking to the world. They took the information in a listless sort of way. While not as dull as Salzman had appeared, they were not the least excited about it. One of them, a man of about thirty, had worked all day without one word of protest, making a clearing to the north

BLIND

along Fifth Avenue. He had struck me very favorably as a man of more than ordinary intelligence. I particularly wanted to hear what he had to say. I looked at him, inquiringly.

"Well, MacKenzie," he said, finally, "I'm glad London is talking to us, but if things are in the same condition over there as they are over here, I should think they would keep their dirigibles working in England."

"That was my thought, at first," I answered, "but I imagine they are not sending somebody over here to get help but to see if there is something they may do to help us."

This new slant on international relations which had been rather acute between the United States and two European countries on August 1st, was received by my little group of listeners, in silence. I had advanced it on mere conjecture. Back in my mind was developing a new theory of international contacts that might come out of this strange condition.

I left them, with some commendatory words for the results we had all helped to bring about during the day, and started back to my apartment. It was the first moment I had really been alone for nearly twelve hours, ever since sight had returned.

Boston had sent a man for supplies. He had

A STRANGE HONEYMOON

come and gone. London was on the air. Nobody cared. Millions of dead were lying in the streets, the homes and the vast buildings of the city. Hundreds of great ships in the harbor were filled with dead and dying. Rats were breeding by the million and disease was spreading. A few thousand half-starved, half-delirious, half-crazed remnants of humanity were gathered in a pitiful assembly in Central Park. Strong men were needed. Every man I had seen was weak. I didn't dare to tell myself how nerve-ragged I was. Helen had told me of three cases of women who had given babies to the world during the day.

The only lights in the heavens were the stars and the moon. Gone was the glare of millions of electric lights that had turned night into day in the Plaza, a few weeks before. The great hotel stood like a vast warehouse on the water front rather than one of the most famous hotels in all the world in the very center of the world's greatest city. I tried to picture to myself the vast city below me and to the north, with its thousands of buildings, all just as silent and as useless as the Plaza. I became lost in trying to solve the questions that raced through my mind. My steps took me back to my apartment, almost automatically. I could see in the window the light that came from the flashlight, and in spite of my depression a

BLIND

surge of pleasure came into my heart. I was married to the most wonderful woman on earth. We were on our honeymoon. I rushed up the stairs and into the apartment.

"Home again, dear," I shouted, but Helen looked over at me and put her hands to her lips.

"Not so loud, David," she said, smilingly. "Mr. Salzman has gone to sleep." She was sitting on the side of the couch and had propped up the little real estate man on a pillow and there he was, sleeping like a child, while this tired woman fanned away the mosquitoes that had begun to fill the room with their pestilential buzzing.

"Come, my dear," I said. "You must get some sleep. Tomorrow we start upon the work of riding the city of its greatest menace."

"David, dear, I'm awfully tired." She came toward me and I caught her in my arms, as she fainted. This time, it was only for a moment. She opened her eyes, smiled at me, and said:

"I'll be all right in the morning, dear. I think we will do wonders, now that we are organized."

I couldn't disabuse such trust and so I smiled my approval. But deep in my heart was the gnawing fear that maybe, after all, it was intended that civilization was to pass from the earth.

CHAPTER XII

Five Days After Sight Returned

I AM carrying my readers into the fifth day after sight returned because I wish to avoid needless details of the four intervening days and nights that might be too gruesome even for those who will be over a century removed from the time of action. Also there are numerous accounts extant that will be available for those who wish to go into more intimate details.

For the sake of continuity, however, I may state briefly that war had been declared against rats, and that we were winning it. I had assigned over two hundred men to this job on the second day and increased the number each day. Fire engines were used to throw ratacid in streams the entire length of the water front. Gas masks were worn by all the crews. They worked day and night. But it had its effect. Other crews had been put to work converting the three lower floors of the Plaza into a temporary city hall. Wrecking crews had been commandeered and used on Fifth Avenue in both directions and on several streets through to the river on the west. A semblance of order had

BLIND

finally made itself apparent in all directions from the Plaza. Men and women who apparently hadn't done a day's work for years were giving ten or more hours each day or night to the tasks assigned them. A dozen of the big restaurants had been put into running order. Their gas ovens had been reconverted into emergency coal-heated ovens and the people were all being fed in relays. While there was much confusion, I doubt if it was any greater than the usual confusion at an army cantonment.

Milk in reasonable quantities was coming in from farms up state and in Connecticut. No pleasure driving had been allowed. Only trucks were allowed on the road. Two broadcasting stations had been put into commission, one from the end of the Park and one at a point on Riverside Drive. I had sent out news items and general advice during three days. Our planes from New York had been to Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cleveland, Chicago, and return. The nearby cities in New Jersey and up state had sent plane messengers. I had decided to abandon the entire lower half of the city for a month, at least, except as we tried to fight disease and rats.

The burned areas, wrecks of falling buildings and congestion was so hopeless below 42nd Street that I gave up all ideas of disentangling it.

FIVE DAYS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

Men with gas masks were sent in all directions searching for any helpless ones among those who might still be living, but while they were rewarded in their efforts, their reports were so terrible that I have never made them matters of record. They would stagger the imagination and serve no useful purpose. I simply want the people in the coming centuries to know that so far as the survivors of the World Tragedy are concerned, we did everything possible under the circumstances to help each other. In no other period of human history has there been recorded a more heroic effort on the part of all humanity to kill selfishness and work for one's fellow-man.

This spirit of sacrifice was evidently at work everywhere. So far as I could learn, no evidence to the contrary was ever adduced. Realizing what this new spirit meant and for the purpose of encouraging it, I suggested to Helen that she and I wait on one of the tables in a large restaurant across from the Plaza, so all the afternoon both of us worked with others assigned to this duty. I could see that it had its effect and created comment.

On many important matters that my substitute at the Plaza Unit headquarters didn't care to pass, I was sought out and asked to give my opinion and orders.

A man from Washington, representing the

BLIND

French embassy, had come to New York by plane to see if we could supply him with some cholera serum as there had been no cholera in France for years and they had no supply. America had been fighting an outbreak of cholera along the Panama Canal and had unlimited supplies of the serum. I gave him instructions and an orderly to help him.

"You are very kind, Mr. MacKenzie, and I wish to thank you on behalf of the people of France. Could I ask you a question, without your being offended?" I nodded my consent.

"Why are you acting as a waiter when there is so much more important work to be done?" He had expressed his viewpoint and I saw a chance to drive home my theory.

"There is no real difference in the importance of work. If two jobs have to be done, who shall say whether one job is more important than the other? I am trying to impress upon the people the thought that the only thing to consider about any job is how well it can be done. Tomorrow I am going to stoke the oven in this restaurant."

"Thank you, sir," he said, saluting gracefully. "I regret that I shall not have the honor of seeing you in your new task. I expect to be on the way to Paris in a dirigible."

"Good luck!" I said to him. "Each man to his

FIVE DAYS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

job and let all of us lift our work up so high that we will not be dragged down by it."

Late that afternoon, Helen and I inspected a large hospital of almost three hundred rooms. A crew of men and women, working like beavers had completely cleared it and resupplied it. Three doctors had assumed to oversee this work and when we reached the hospital, which had been a heavily endowed Jewish institution on 64th Street, patients were already being brought in from the field hospital in the Park.

Dr. Cleary, who was in charge of admissions, saw us and stopped his work for a moment. It was all so orderly and business-like that I was amazed.

"I want to congratulate you, Doctor," I said to him, looking around an office that was the last word in equipment. "How did you do it?"

"Been doing it for years, MacKenzie," he said, "but this is the only time that I could have everything I wanted regardless of price. I've had two trucks running from the city and state supply departments for two days."

"How about your help?" I asked him, realizing how important this item was always considered in hospital work.

"The greatest array of help I ever saw," he replied, smiling. "They've got something that I haven't seen in a hospital staff for so long that I

BLIND

thought it was one of the lost arts. Enthusiasm. Every man and woman is anxious to do more than his or her share."

"That's wonderful, isn't it, Helen?" I turned to my wife.

"I think I know where they get it, David," was all she said.

Dr. Cleary looked at her, significantly.

"You are quite right, Mrs. MacKenzie," he assured her. "If it wasn't for that husband of yours, New York would be a hopeless mass of dying humanity, instead of an enthusiastic, well-organized, living force that is going to set the pace for a new civilization."

I put these words down exactly as I recall them. I didn't deserve them. And yet, I also knew that Helen and Dr. Cleary believed that I was directly responsible for the things that had taken place in the five days since sight had come back. It goes to show how freely people of real attainment are willing to give praise to others. Here was one of the most efficient hospital authorities in New York, working like a Hercules and giving me credit for the very thing he was doing. Here was one of the world's most wonderful women, after five days of work such as only an inspired, spiritual force could translate into human effort, telling the world that her husband was responsible for things

FIVE DAYS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

that he had very little to do with. And the result of their unstinted praise was that I determined to keep on trying to do my best, praying always that it might not fail to accomplish something along the lines I planned, even though I didn't reach my fullest expectations.

We left Dr. Cleary, up to his ears in work and smiling as he did it. On the way out we saw stretcher bearers bringing in some of the most hopeless looking human beings I had ever seen, in fact, I had been too busy to pay much attention to individual cases for the five days preceding. I shuddered as I walked along. Helen, who had learned to say very little when I appeared absorbed, seemed equally absorbed.

"What were you thinking, David?" she finally asked me.

"I was thinking what a wonderful thing it is to be a doctor."

"So was I," she said, quietly, "but every doctor in the hospital is thinking what a wonderful thing it is to be a man like David Glenn MacKenzie."

"Helen," I said to her, and I was very serious in my tone, because I meant it, "please don't say such things. It makes me ashamed of myself. One doctor at this time is worth a hundred MacKenzies."

"David, my dear," and her voice conveyed a

BLIND

heart filled with love, "if it wasn't for you, the doctors wouldn't feel like working. I never sang without a manager. The world will always be filled with people who can do things but they only work when they feel that somebody is urging them, someone who is leading."

"Leadership is nothing but assumption," I retorted, falling back on my pet theory.

"Not quite so easy as that, my dear," she answered. "It is one of the most intangible of human qualities. As is the case with other talents, those who have them pay little attention to them. Only those who develop their talents are the ones who reach the top. In the case of leadership, if you don't do your best with it somebody will take it from you or supercede you."

"Do you seriously advise me to cultivate this temporary hold I have obtained on the people within the last few days?" I asked her.

"Why, David," she replied, "of course I advise it. You owe it to everybody. There isn't anybody else to whom we all can look for guidance."

"But, my dear," I countered, determined not to be taken off my feet with her enthusiasm which I knew to be prejudiced, "you mustn't expect other people to share your views regarding my attainments."

"Whether I expect it or not, my dear David,"

FIVE DAYS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

she answered, "they do share my views. I've listened to them, expressing themselves, for the past five days. The things they have said about you would turn your head completely if it wasn't so firmly set."

"Well, dear," I felt obliged to say, "I won't quarrel about it. I still feel that what I have done has been merely to guide the tremendous energy and enthusiasm of others."

"You'll have to think differently, tomorrow, Mr. David." The significance in her tone startled me.

"What do you mean, my dear?" I asked, deeply interested and not a little apprehensive.

"Tomorrow, those capable of attending a conference will proclaim you the first Dictator of New York. I really shouldn't have told you, but I thought you might as well be prepared."

We were just turning the corner at 60th Street, headed for our apartment which we now occupied alone. Salzman had been put to work in a restaurant and was sleeping in the Park.

I stopped short. I knew, of course, that Helen was telling me the truth. I had seen many evidences of respect shown to my judgment. It had been borne in upon all of us that we had no government of any kind. But this was the first real intimation that any serious attempt was to be made

BLIND

tending toward a different form of government than the one we had always lived under.

"Dictator!" The word rang in my ears. No revolution. No army to bring it short. It was to come to me without even my asking. Once established, I could do what I willed. I was to be made the absolute ruler over the wealthiest city in all the world. There was no power in America that could take away my absolutism. It was to come to me, the next day. I looked at Helen. Her eyes were shining, reflected in the glare of a searchlight that some genius had set at the corner against the darkness of a moonless night.

I took her into my arms.

"You are sure this will please the people, my dear?" I asked her.

"It is the best thing that could happen for everybody. You will accept it if they choose you, won't you, David?" I could see the anxiety in her eyes.

"I shall take the night to decide, my love."

So it was on that night that the fate of democracy was decided.

CHAPTER XIII

The People Make Their Choice

I WAS up early. I know that I tossed all night, my mind given over to strange thoughts. I must have asked myself a thousand questions, waking or sleeping. Most of them remained unanswered as dawn came into the apartment.

One question, however, I had answered and, even before breakfast, I sat at my table in the living room and ran off on the typewriter the remarks that I intended to make. Fortunately, I preserved them, and am not obliged to rely upon my memory.

Helen did not press me with questions. She knew that I was wrestling with the problem that was to come up. She paid me the compliment of letting me alone, to do my own thinking.

We walked to the Plaza about eight o'clock. Many people were already at work or going to their tasks. As nearly everyone seemed to know me, even though in many cases I was unable to recall them, I made it a rule to speak pleasantly to everybody. I found quite a line of people at the

BLIND

temporary executive offices, all waiting for instructions on various matters. I went through with the work as rapidly as possible, keeping busy until nearly ten o'clock. I was cheered with reports from men who had been working on a milk survey and also from men on the water supply. It was becoming increasingly certain that we would have a full supply of fresh milk coming into the city within a few days. It was also certain that the wonderful water supply of the city was in perfect shape from an engineering standpoint. In fact, it can be stated that if the water had failed us, at any time, this history might never have been written.

About eleven o'clock, I noticed that a crowd was forming in the Plaza. It soon swelled into a throng, evidently coming together by pre-arrangement. At 11:30 three men came to the office. One of them was a man named Kernoff, who had been the publisher of a paper called *The Toiler*. I had never met him and only vaguely recalled that there was such a publication. Although an American citizen, his leanings were European. He had shown up, three days before, and joined one of the squads taking care of the disposal of the dead, a loathsome but very necessary work. He was the spokesman for the three.

THE PEOPLE MAKE THEIR CHOICE

"Mr. MacKenzie," he said, "we are a committee chosen by the people to ask you if you will accept the position of Dictator until such time as a better form of government can be suggested?"

I arose and looked at them. For just a moment, I hesitated. Had I not been forewarned, there is no telling what form my answer would have taken.

"Gentlemen!" I said, "I thank you for the evident compliment you are paying me. I have something that I desire to say to the people. Suppose we go to them while I explain the situation as I understand it."

Whether they thought I was to accept their proposal or decline it, I couldn't tell. But it was quite evident that the gathering throng expected me to make a speech of acceptance. They cheered generously as I approached them. I stepped into the rear of a big truck that was conveniently drawn up. After waiting for the cheers to die down, I made this address that I had carefully prepared:

"My fellow Americans. I am glad to see that you are anxious to begin once again the great task of government. It will take every ounce of strength that we possess to bring order out of the terrible chaos that prevails.

"Let me, briefly, review the situation that con-

BLIND

fronts us, remembering, all the time, that a similar condition or worse exists in every other part of the world.

"For three weeks every human being on earth was blind. We have not yet found out the cause. Six days ago, sight returned, as mysteriously as it first went away. For six days we have faced the awful situation brought about by the tragedy of world blindness.

"I cannot tell you how many people have survived. Whether five people or more out of every hundred are still living, I cannot say. I know that those who are still alive will perish if we do not busy ourselves with the task of making the earth fit for human habitation.

"Not a railroad is running. Not a telephone line is in operation. Not one electric light plant or gas plant is functioning. Every human activity that was being conducted for profit, has ceased. Money is of no value. We have, in New York alone, enough money to take care of the needs of the entire country for fifty years to come, assuming that we finally go back to a monetary basis.

"There are upwards of one hundred and twenty-five millions of dead, above ground, in the United States alone. So far as I can see, the tragedy through which we have passed has wiped out everything that made for social order and progress.

THE PEOPLE MAKE THEIR CHOICE

"Billions of rats are gorging themselves with filth, right here in New York. If they are not stopped, within the next thirty days, they will drive us out of the city. They will eat their way into every food supply, go into the country and destroy every vestige of food and spread disease to all the cattle in the country.

"Men who have reported conditions to me tell me that the Grand Central Station and the Pennsylvania Station are nothing but charred wrecks. I haven't been a half mile from here since sight returned. The entire New Haven system, New York Central, Baltimore & Ohio and Pennsylvania are lined with wrecks of passenger and freight trains. Not a newspaper has been printed since August 1st, at twelve o'clock.

"We must clean up, for human occupancy, definite spaces so that those who are still living may have food, shelter and sanitary conditions. We must get pure milk into the city.

"Property values have gone. Records mean nothing from August 1st. There is only one standard by which any man, woman or child can live on earth for the next few years and that is the standard of service to others.

"Today, we are created equal. It is the only time since the signing of the Declaration of In-

BLIND

dependence that the fundamental principle of pure equality has been a fact. Today, as Americans, without a public official in the entire republic, all men are equals, created so by a tragedy such as never visited the world in all its history.

"All the piled-up gold of the world, all the vast enterprises that meant so much to human happiness, all that has been regarded as wealth since the dawn of civilization is ours, but these things spell nothing in human happiness, today.

"Every man and woman in New York can have a motor car, but can't get a chauffeur to drive it. Every woman can go into any of the great jewelry stores on the Avenue and decorate herself with the most expensive jewelry. Who cares?

"Enough clothes are piled up in the manufacturing establishments of the city to supply all of us for the next ten years. We can have them by helping ourselves and nobody is bothering to do it.

"The reason is that there are bigger things to think of. It may be that we can set an example to the rest of the country by doing our work, more unselfishly and more thoroughly. First of all, I want to make it clear that we must not violate the principles of democracy. Under a democratic form of government, we have set an example for the world. I propose that we continue to act as Ameri-

THE PEOPLE MAKE THEIR CHOICE

can citizens by adhering strictly to American principles. With that object in mind, I suggest that we turn this meeting into a convention of citizens and proceed to nominate candidates for Mayor, after which we shall proceed to ballot."

Hardly had I finished my remarks when Kernoff was on his feet demanding recognition. I recognized him and he took the platform and after a burst of fiery oratory, nominated me for Mayor. The nomination was received with shouts of applause that couldn't help but stir me, profoundly. I want to make it clear that at no time had I done anything to further such a procedure. When I asked for other nominations, the cheering was resumed. With a smile, I finally declared the nominations closed and then said: "Friends, I thank you. With your help I know that we shall meet every problem successfully."

I kept the meeting in order for a couple of hours, electing an advisory council of nine and listening to suggestions from those who were willing to advance them. In this way I learned the names and got a good line on the intelligence of many of the people. It helped in perfecting our organization.

Working at top speed and utilizing the temporary organization as a basis on which to build, by

BLIND

five o'clock in the afternoon, I had a city government well in hand. I felt that the city could dispense with a police force, temporarily at least. It also was evident that most of the regular governmental functions would not be needed in our condition. Our entire problem seemed to be sanitary and to that we gave our persistent attention.

CHAPTER XIV

A Month After Sight Returned

IT was just one month after sight had so miraculously returned to the world that a meeting of delegates was held in New York to settle upon some national policy on governmental activities; the best way to adjust ourselves to new conditions and take up such other matters as might properly come before such a meeting. Rumbblings that greatly distressed most of the New York people were coming to us in various forms. Each part of the country had different problems and in many outlying places the conditions did not compare with those in the large cities. Naturally there was some resentment on the part of some sections on being asked to contribute to needs in other places on a basis that seemed inequitable.

Over the radio came calls for help that were heart-rending and we in New York tried to keep in constant touch with every activity all over the entire country. Despite our apparent effort to participate in every appeal that was broadcast or reached us in other ways, it soon became clear that selfishness was coming back into its own. The early

BLIND

enthusiasm to help everybody else, so evident in the first few days after sight returned, was beginning to wear off. To arrive at a national policy, I drafted a call and started broadcasting it on September 15th from our municipal station.

I asked to have all stations in operation in the entire country to rebroadcast it. What few newspapers were being published, in a crude way, also carried the call. The failure of electrical plants to function kept most radio sets out of commission, but makeshift sets were being installed on a community basis, with storage batteries, in many sections. Delegates began coming in by plane, two days before the meeting, which I had set for Friday, September 22d. In my mind it was a national crisis, and there was no time to waste. Some of the delegates were pitiable looking sights, but others of them seemed to have almost returned to the condition of pre-tragedy days. I had arranged for New York to meet this first contingent of delegates in a way that would tend to make them friendly. While I felt that the first duty of all of us was to America, I also had been working out in my own mind the possibilities of an international agreement that might forever put war out of consideration as a means of settling the supposed difficulties of humanity. Please understand that I am not trying, in any way, to minimize the value

A MONTH AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

of the work done by others toward the same end. I am merely trying to set right the sequence of the great events that followed, so rapidly after our New York convention.

Why Chicago or some other centrally located city was not chosen as the place to hold this convention is just another instance of the assumption of leadership. As Mayor of the country's most important city, I sent out the call and it was accepted in good faith.

For the three days previous to the set date, we did everything in our power to make the incoming delegates perfectly at home. I was pleased at the large number of women who came in by plane, bearing credentials from various places. There was no real apportionment of delegates to population. It was just a getting together of a large number of men and women sent by their stricken communities to see what could be done to carry on the work that confronted all the people of the country.

Among the duties of the reception committee which I had selected was the very practical one of letting each delegate visit our increasing number of hospitals, detention camps, community dining rooms and see the way in which our health squads were working to rid the city of rats, vermin, bugs, filth of all kinds and clarify and revitalize the

BLIND

atmosphere. The progress that these squads were making under the leadership of various volunteer health engineers, was remarkable. Nothing but a fanaticism bordering on the superhuman could have accomplished the results they had obtained. Vast areas had been dynamited and burned. Big open spaces, where once had been commercial palaces worth hundreds of millions according to pre-tragedy standards, now gave open vent to the fresh air that came in from the Atlantic.

At several wharves on the North and East rivers, big ferry-boats were moored, waiting for a quota of people to be taken into the harbor at night, for the benefit of the cool salt air. As Mayor, I had only to make suggestions and they were carried out with enthusiasm. Things that never occurred to me were being done. I tried to lend personal encouragement everywhere.

One of the women delegates who said she was Mrs. Claude Bennett, from Atlanta, Georgia, introduced herself to Helen and me the evening before the date set for the convention. She asked if I could give her just a minute.

"Why certainly, Mrs. Bennett," I assured her. "Of course you can have all the time you want. What can I do for you?"

"You may think it an awfully silly question, Mr.

A MONTH AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

MacKenzie," she said, with evident hesitation, "but I feel in duty bound to ask it."

I looked at Helen, who was seated beside me in our new office, on the street floor of the Plaza, which was serving as a sort of centralized City Hall for the various community groups that were trying to function all over what had been greater New York. We waited for Mrs. Bennett to continue.

"What about God, Mr. MacKenzie? Have the people in New York stopped worshipping God?"

The earnestness with which she put the question could not be mistaken. I looked again at Helen for inspiration, but found none. She was as much at sea as was I.

Mrs. Bennett was intently waiting for my answer. Finally, I said:

"Why did you ask that question, Mrs. Bennett?"

"I'll tell you why, Mr. MacKenzie," she said. "For four weeks the white people in Atlanta have been living without a God. The blacks have been parading the streets, shouting 'Glory hallelujahs' night and day. The white people, almost to a man, have been deriding the thought of a God so utterly lacking in love toward humanity that He has practically wiped mankind from the face of the earth."

BLIND

Right here, I wish to emphasize the tragic importance of this statement as viewed by this woman from Atlanta. To the people who may take the trouble to read this history, a century from now, and later, it may lack interest. By that time, a complete obliteration of the tragedy of today may have taken place. Civilized people, with all the wealth that has been created to date and with new ideas of human relationship on which to build, may have evolved a more satisfactory mental concept of God and the worship of God, so that any observations given the subject by the people of today may seem absurd. They well may say, "Why didn't these stricken people give every thought to the work in hand and let God alone for a few weeks?"

It is all in the viewpoint, all in getting the correct mental picture. The thinkers of a century from now may even go so far as to say, "Why didn't MacKenzie stick to material facts and not try to interest us in such abstract and confusing subjects as the 'God' of his time?"

I put these queries here to let my readers of the future know that I anticipate their thoughts and yet insist upon giving some space to this particular subject.

"What do you think of God, Mrs. Bennett?" I asked, anxious not to say the wrong thing.

A MONTH AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

"Well, Mr. MacKenzie," she replied, "if you had asked me that question a month ago, I would have said, 'There is no God.' I was in my home, a few miles from Atlanta, starving to death. My husband was lost. My little girl had not come home from school on the day of the tragedy. I had been praying night and day and living on practically nothing. Then, as my mind weakened under the fearful strain, I stopped praying and began to curse God. Several times I had gone a little ways down the private driveway that leads into the main road running past our little home. Then I had lost courage and crawled back again. Day after day and through the long nights, I would sit, alone, trying to think what had come over the world. No sound. No light. No telephone. Not a human voice. Just desolation. The only way I knew it was night or day was through the difference in the temperature.

"Then came the early morning of the day when sight returned. I saw a star shining in the heavens. There was no moon, as I recall it, just the faint light of a little star, trillions of miles away, coming through the terrible blackness of the night to tell me that God was in His heavens. And I was ashamed of myself for my awful blasphemy."

Helen was listening, entranced, as this cultured woman from the South told her simple story.

BLIND

"That was a month ago, Mrs. Bennett," I said, anxious to have her bring her problem right up to the minute. "How do you feel about it, now?"

"I feel even more deeply, right now, Mr. MacKenzie," she said, fervently. "I know that my husband is dead and I have learned that my little girl must have starved without a helping hand. Her schoolhouse is a charred mass. But I know as I have never known before that there is a God.

"Why, don't you see, Mr. MacKenzie, all that we have been through was just a manifestation of some great law. Suddenly, we all lost our sight. Then it returned. Had there been no law of nature to govern us, some of us would have been affected, others would not have been. But the laws of nature are absolute. They never change. They never cease. They have always been. They always will be. Billions of years from today there will still be great immeasurable constellations of stars being created, suns giving heat and light, worlds like ours hurling through endless space, all in tune with a supreme law greater than all of them put together. It is too vast, too infinite for me to grasp, completely, and yet, something tells me that in this new thought there is a new God for me to worship."

She looked at me with entreaty in her eyes.

A MONTH AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

Helen, too, looked at me as if she expected me to say something.

"Yes, Mrs. Bennett," I said. "There is a God. There always was and always will be a God. He is not the God that man understands. He is the God of infinite things, the supreme law of this universe that we know and all the universes beyond . . . worlds without end, that man may never know except in imagination.

"You must be very tired, after your trip."

"Yes, I am tired, awfully tired," she said, wearily.

"I want you to stay with Mrs. MacKenzie, tonight. We shall have a hard day's work, tomorrow."

With one of us on each side of her, we walked quietly to our home, the little woman from Atlanta leaning gratefully on us for support. After Helen had seen our visitor safely in bed, she came to the living room and sat beside me.

"David," she said, "is it really worth the effort you are putting into it?"

I knew just what she meant. She was thinking of what Mrs. Bennett had told her. She had made her terrible experience so real that it had affected my sensitive wife deeply.

"Yes, my dear," I said to her, taking one of her beautiful hands in mine. "It is worth all that we

BLIND

can put into it, and more. I know how hopeless it seems, and yet Mrs. Bennett's story has given me a new and beautiful thought, one that must sustain us, as we try to bring order out of this seeming chaos that confronts us. She said that 'Nature never violates a single law.'

"Think of it, Helen, my dear. You and I are part of a great plan that has always existed and that can never be destroyed. It functions always. It never stops. It never has made a mistake. It can't make a mistake. It is the eternal law. We must try to become attuned to it and do our best to put all the men of today and through countless ages into harmony with this law that controls everything."

"Is that God?" she asked me.

"No, my dear," I replied. "God is greater than that. God created the law. We may understand the law in some stumbling, incoherent way, but as men and women we can never understand God. All that we can hope is to know that there is a God."

CHAPTER XV

The National Convention

THE first national convention after the tragedy was held on Friday, September 22, 1950. My reason for calling the convention was more for the purpose of helping to re-establish the morale of the people than with any thought in mind that the country, as a whole, was in shape to function again. Word had been passed around generally, so that those who had responded to the call sent out by radio, were ready for the opening of the assembly.

I walked over to the Plaza with Helen, early, and dictated my remarks for an opening address of welcome, to a new stenographer, whom I had pressed into service a few days before. Already I could see that the terrible routine of caring for the awful cases of those who had survived the ordeal and who had contracted disease during it, was beginning to be irksome to many. But I determined to make a definite effort to set the entire country on the right track. I mention it so that you will be in sympathy with my address and know just what prompted it.

BLIND

I had delegated a staff of some of my best workers to act as convention ushers and officers. At ten o'clock, in the large and magnificently appointed ballroom of the Plaza that had been made ready for the meeting, I called the delegates to order. I was deeply impressed by the meeting. The number of women who had made this trip to New York was significant. They certainly showed their equality in numbers as well as in their apparent eagerness to do the work that we were facing. As I stepped to the stand at the end of the room, and rapped for order, I was greeted by a round of applause. I bowed my thanks.

Years from now my address may pass into the pages of forgotten historic documents. But I need not assure the future students who may read this personal history that I was determined to make my remarks as telling as possible. I realized their importance, then, no matter how they may be regarded in later years. Before making my address, I asked a little priest who had been working like a fanatic in the relief of those who needed spiritual as well as physical aid, if he would invoke the divine blessing. He did so, in a few words, but they sank deep into the souls of all of us. Then he whispered in my ear that he would like to go back to work, and I sent him away, with my heart filled with gratitude that such men still lived and be-

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

lieved. I then stepped to the speaker's stand and spoke into the microphone that one of my electrical experts had kindly rigged up for broadcasting the convention to those who were inclined to tune in, in various parts of the country. I am giving you my remarks, just as I delivered them.

"My fellow Americans, I welcome you to New York, and call you together for the purpose of taking note of the distressing situation that confronts humanity, not only here in our own country but all over the world. Briefly I would like to summarize the important facts as I have had them brought to my attention in the month that has elapsed since sight returned to mankind.

"While any estimate as to the extent of the loss of life will be mere guesswork on my part, I feel that we can conservatively say that less than 5 per cent of humankind remains alive on earth. Here in New York we have lost large numbers since sight returned, but this death rate is diminishing very fast. Our wonderful showing is due to the heroic efforts of thousands of men and women who have worked night and day to establish hospitals for the care of everybody who needed help. I want all of you to visit our hospitals before you return to your homes.

"Our greatest problem here in New York has been to fight rats, disease, vermin, and keep the

BLIND

atmosphere purified against the terrible odors that decaying things have forced into the air. All over the city I am glad to say we have managed to make appreciable gains, due to the fact that we have used out-door arrangements for sleeping at night. Plans adopted at a meeting of our new Board of Health, composed of three of the city's greatest young experts, are now progressing in a most hopeful way.

"News from London, Paris, Berlin, Pekin, and other world cities is just as familiar to you as to me. Thanks to the radio we are getting reports regularly, and of course we are keeping the world informed as to our own conditions. The news of this convention will be on the air going to all the world just as it is transacted.

"I desire to introduce for your consideration this thought—that from now we must try to act as brothers of the rest of humanity, and not try to arrogate to ourselves a nationalistic superiority. It must be evident that the great cosmic force that we call Nature does not treat the people of the darkest places in Africa any differently than she treats us, who have boasted of our alleged superiority. I trust that from this convention we shall make the first step toward a United States of the World, in which there will be absolute equality of

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

opportunity for men of every nation to do what is right in the sight of future generations.

"As to the routine of the convention, I do not care to make the slightest suggestion. I am open to every thought that is offered. At last, we are all equal in fact as well as in theory. My friends, let us not fail in the magnificent opportunity that comes to us. We have been the victims of a world tragedy. Let us treat it as citizens of the world and not as isolated nationalists. I now turn the convention over to the delegates."

Immediately the convention was in an uproar. Scores of delegates were on their feet clamoring for recognition. I rapped for order and after the noise had subsided, I said: "Ladies and gentlemen of the convention, you have my assurance that everybody will be given full opportunity to be heard. No favoritism will be shown. We are facing a new era. We must be guided by the wisdom of all and not by the expedient thing of the most insistent. Let every one take his full time and in this way we will surely reach some good conclusions."

"As most of you are unknown to me, I shall point you out as I recognize you from the platform. Unless you are making a parliamentary motion, I would like to have you address the convention from the platform as the delegates should

BLIND

hear all that you may have to say. I now recognize the gentleman over on the left in the center."

The delegate walked down to the platform. I waited for him to reach me and asked him for his name. I grasped him by the hand as he told me and drew him over to the desk that we had set up as a sort of pulpit.

"My God, Governor," I remember saying to him. "Why did you not make yourself known before?"

He smiled, and shook his head, sadly.

"I didn't get in until two hours ago, Mr. MacKenzie," he said. "And besides, I guess we are all equal at last, as you so clearly put it in your address."

I looked at the audience in a sort of daze. I could see why I had not recognized one of the country's greatest statesmen. He had a three weeks' beard on his face. He was at least fifty to sixty pounds lighter than his regular pictures had shown him and his clothes were anything but those of a distinguished man of affairs. Evidently the audience had gleaned from my attitude that something out of the ordinary was in the air, as they sat with the utmost quiet while I rapped the gavel on the desk.

"Friends," I said, "when I recognized the gentleman whom I am to introduce to you, it was

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

purely a parliamentary recognition. I did not know him from hundreds of other delegates. As he came to the platform I asked him his name. I am ashamed to say that I did not know one of the most prominent men in America. But I know that he will forgive me. All of us have changed. This terrible tragedy has taken its toll from all of us and left us changed in appearance as well as in mental make-up. Had the man at my side appeared on the platform in New York, two months ago, in any gathering, he would have been known to the entire audience. Today he came to the platform of our convention and I had to ask him who he was. He shows that he has been making a hard fight. But his presence here today in answer to the call for a national convention, shows that he is anxious to do his part in the work ahead. It is with pleasure that I present as the first speaker on today's program, the distinguished and brilliant democrat, one of the nation's most humane citizens, the Governor of the great Empire State of the South, Honorable David Crockett Miller of Texas."

I turned to Governor Miller, and as the audience stood up and cheered him, a smile came over his face that seemed to say, "I guess my long trip was worth all the effort it has cost me."

"My fellow citizens," he said, "I bring you greetings from the State of Texas. Two months

BLIND

ago, we were in the full flower of our growing crops. The cotton was ready for harvest. The wheat and corn was waving in the Summer breeze. Thousands of busses and hundreds of trains were making their way along the concrete and steel-rail highways of our vast domain. The air was filled with flying planes. Suddenly blindness came upon all our people and death began to mow us down. None were favored, rich and poor, the godly and the ungodly, the young and the old. First came terrible deaths by accident. Then came death from privation, hunger and disease. For three weeks we were in chaos. Then sight returned as suddenly as it had been taken away. As Governor of Texas, I have tried to do what the situation called for. I fear that I have failed, utterly. It was beyond my strength, beyond my effort. Death still rides the prairies and all through the cities of Texas. Disease is setting in. Our only hope to avoid absolute extermination lies with those who live in the smaller towns."

He paused. It was evident that he was using every ounce of his strength to keep himself from falling. He gripped the desk before him and again his wonderful voice went to the audience. I felt that I was watching history in the making. One of the country's statesmen was in action.

"For four weeks I have been touring Texas in

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

a plane. It was impossible to use the highways because they are still cluttered with the wrecks of automobiles. On our railroads, there is not one clear line of a hundred miles anywhere in the state. I doubt if we will make general use of the railroads again inside of a year.

"I left Houston yesterday morning, piloted by my daughter, who is an expert flyer. She has done all the flying for me. Mrs. Miller was visiting friends in Galveston when the tragedy came. We have had no word from her and must assume that she is among the millions of Texans who are dead, without even a Christian burial. Galveston was a city without hope when we stopped there for a few hours, three weeks ago, a few days after sight returned. An effort to establish radio communication is being made all over the state. No attempt to run a newspaper, a railroad, a telegraph or telephone line, a bus line or an electric light plant is being made. Each community is trying to work out its own salvation. The natural gas lines are giving what artificial light and heat is needed. Our water supplies are intact.

"And now, friends, I want to tell you why I came to this convention. I came because I felt that civilization is trembling in the balance. I came because I had to come. When the call first reached us, a few days ago, I sent up a prayer of thanks

BLIND

to Almighty God for putting courage into the hearts of the people of New York. My daughter and I reached New York only two hours ago. On our way north, we stopped for a very short time in New Orleans, Birmingham, Richmond and Washington. In New Orleans the blacks have assumed entire charge of the city. An orgy of lawlessness is going on. It is going to take time and patience to restore order.

"Birmingham has suffered staggering losses from fires which swept unchecked for days all over the city. We landed on the outskirts of the city and talked with some of the citizens. So far as we could learn, no real effort is being made to clean up the city. It seems to be each one for himself. Richmond has a definite program in prospect. Fires have not been so devastating there and some of the larger buildings are being cleaned up and used for hospitals. Washington is probably in better physical shape than any city in the country. You probably know this, already, but the President and his family, the vice-president and most of the cabinet members did not survive. The presidential car was wrecked as it was leaving the White House for a trip into the country and all of the occupants were killed except the chauffeur, who evidently went for aid and lost his way.

"So you see, friends, we face a great govern-

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

mental crisis. For a few weeks the thought of the tragedy will tone us down and we will work unselfishly for each other. After that I fear the inherent selfishness of men will begin to come again to the fore and the enormous wealth of our country will begin to make its appeal to the greed and avarice that has grown up in the hearts of men. We must set a new standard of human values and human responsibilities. We must insist that all of us start on an equal basis. I have carried out that idea so far as I can in my own case by resigning my position as Governor of Texas. I am only a private citizen. I shall call a convention by radio in a few days and ask for a new election.

"And now, for the immediate problems that we face, nationally. I suggest that this convention frame a new constitution to be submitted to the states for ratification. I suggest that we defer the election of any national officers until after the constitution is adopted. I suggest that we make a constitution that will fit the situation we now face. I suggest that we abolish the positions of Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy. It may have cost 95 per cent of the world's population to bring it about, but thank God, from today, there can never be an excuse for war among the nations of the earth. I suggest that we incorporate a

BLIND

national renunciation of war into our new constitution."

At this point there was a slight ripple of applause. Governor Miller paused. The applause gained. Then it took on the nature of an ovation. He finally implored silence and then continued.

"All over the country we must seek to re-establish our relations with each other. The community life of my early boyhood, in which nearly everybody participated, had become outmoded in recent years. The auto and airplane, with their elastic transportation, have been largely responsible for this changed social condition. We did not know our neighbors in the true sense. We must learn to know them, now. Family life must all be revived and made more stable. Out of forty million families in America, less than two months ago, there are not one million today. How many husbands and wives have gone through this crisis together we have no way of telling.

"Property values have been wiped out. Today, all the property of the nation belongs to all the people. We must establish this fact as a matter of fundamental law in our constitution. The only real wealth today is youth and health. To conserve health is one of the greater problems. I suggest the immediate application of all our national, state and community energies to compulsory regulations

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

of health that will include every man, woman and child in America in its program.

"We have always prided ourselves on our public school system. Under it, we were supposed to attain a high educational standard. And yet, after one hundred and sixty years and the expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars in vast educational programs, we had produced a nation of moral imbeciles and mental degenerates and out of every thousand adults living in our country on August 1st, I doubt if there was an average of one in every hundred who could really be called a thinking man or woman. Under our system of education, we had gone in for mass production; individuality was killed and the capacity to think logically and intelligently was destroyed. This must be remedied at once. We must start all over again along the lines of intelligent use of the brains that nature gave us. We must all go to school, men and women, as well as children. We shall have a greater incentive to think than ever before because we have greater opportunities for rendering service. In our social, political and economic system of pre-blind days, it was almost impossible for a man or woman to help humanity. As Governor of Texas, I found myself tied hand and foot with conditions. The state was waterlogged with selfishness. Try as I would, I found

BLIND

myself unable to select the men I wanted and to carry out the promises I had made in good faith to the people who had elected me.

"I honestly believe that when I return to Texas, as a private citizen, I shall give more real service to the people of my state in the next two months, if God spares them, than I did as Governor, during the past two years.

"My mind has been seething ever since those terrible days of darkness. Only one thing has kept itself clear and that is the thought that I must do all in my power to help in straightening out the fearful tangle in which humanity finds itself. I felt the call to come here, to say a few words to you and to urge you in the name of the ruler of the universe, to put selfishness out of your hearts and start the march of civilization all over again with a determination to be more worthy of the great unknown force that sent us here."

As he closed, his strength seemed to leave him, suddenly, and he fell in a heap on the floor. I sprang to his side and just as I reached him a beautiful young girl uttered a cry and threw herself by his side. She, too, fainted. With the help of some people on the platform, we carried both of them to a side room, where I left them in charge of an attendant. I then went back to the platform and explained to the restless audience

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

that Governor Miller and his daughter had fainted from exhaustion, but we would soon have them in good shape.

I do not feel that you will be interested in a verbatim report of the convention proceedings. Governor Miller's address, while the most dramatic event, was not the only one, the official records will show. I declared a recess at one o'clock and Helen and I had lunch, in one of the side rooms, with Governor Miller and his daughter as our guests. I tried to get him to stay with us for a few days, but he insisted that his work was waiting for him in Texas. He did consent to rest until the following morning.

CHAPTER XVI

An Exchange of Views

AT six o'clock that evening, Helen and I called upon Governor Miller and his daughter, who had been assigned to a suite on the third floor of the hotel. Miss Miller answered our knock upon the door. There was no room service of any kind, but we had managed to move a small dynamo into the hotel and operate a local system of electricity. Miss Miller invited us into the room.

I introduced Mrs. MacKenzie and they greeted each other, warmly.

"I think you New York people are doing a marvelous job," she said. "Won't you sit down. I'll see if father is awake. He was very tired."

She returned, almost immediately, smiling.

"He is up and will join us, at once."

As she sat down, I said to her: "Tell me, Miss Miller. What do you think of things?"

"In what way, Mr. MacKenzie?"

"Do you think, for instance, that Nature intended to wipe humanity from the earth?"

She hesitated for a moment. Then she shook her head, slowly.

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

"I have not been thinking clearly, Mr. MacKenzie. But that particular thought has never occurred to me. I can hardly believe that Nature had such an intention. You see, Nature's laws are absolute. Forces of change are always at work. In the vast scheme of an endless universe, in which every law is so perfectly adjusted that it is dependent upon every other law, I doubt if the continuance of humanity or its total destruction enters into Nature's plans. Humanity always appeared to me as a mere incident in the universe. All the human beings who ever lived on earth could be buried in three cubic miles of space. Physically they have meant nothing in Nature's material scheme.

"It must be evident that our physical value has been negligible. If we have any real bearing on Nature's plans, it must be along the lines of intellect. When we look at our intellectual development, honestly, we must admit that we were headed toward chaos."

Governor Miller had entered from his room and was standing behind his daughter. He had shaved and his sleep had done him a deal of good. He looked like a new man. He stepped into the room and put his hands on his daughter's shoulders. The young lady stopped, in confusion.

"Mr. MacKenzie asked me if I thought that

BLIND

Nature had intended to wipe humanity off the earth and failed. I was giving him my views on the matter."

"I heard you, my dear," he said. "I was interested in your philosophy."

He sat down beside her, and smiled at us.

"I have the convention going along in a routine way, Governor," I said. "But I am afraid that our problems are far greater than routine matters. So Mrs. MacKenzie and I thought if we could formulate some definite ideas it would help. I thought that you might have some views that you could give us on the general situation."

"Thank you, MacKenzie. I'll admit that I had some very concrete ideas when I was jumping around Texas for the past four weeks, but the more I think of the situation the more baffled I become. You must have noticed how rambling my remarks were, as I addressed the convention, this morning.

"I thought, when I stepped to the platform, that I was going to say something that would clarify everything. I'm afraid I did little more than go off at a political tangent. However, now that you and I are here, where we can talk freely, I think we may settle a few things definitely. What is your honest opinion, as to the future? Do you

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

think humanity is doomed to extinction, no matter what we may do to avert it?"

I should have been prepared for the question, but it took me by surprise, even though it contained the same generic subject matter that Miss Miller had offered her opinion on, only a few minutes before.

"No, Governor," I said, after a moment's hesitation. Then feeling that he wished to talk on the subject, I said, "How do you feel?"

"I do not feel that humanity is doomed or that such was the intention of the natural manifestation that brought on the crisis," he said. "In fact, I feel definitely committed to the idea that if we make the right effort, we will soon see humanity and civilization headed toward the most wonderful spiritual advance in all history." His face seemed to light up as though he gained inspiration from his own words.

"Let me see if I cannot make myself more definite. As thinking men, we know what were the greatest troubles with humanity on the day when blindness struck the world. See if you agree with me.

"Wealth was most improperly distributed. Those who had unlimited means appeared entirely indifferent to the needs of those who were poor. Billionaires lived in sight of the homes of those

BLIND

who were starving, but the billionaires took no note of it. Most men in public life catered to the masses on the day before election and catered to the rich and powerful the day after election. There was only one God and it was spelt G-O-L-D in capital letters. Every big nation was jealous of every other big nation. Two wars, each greater than the one that we were told was fought for the sole reason of ending all war, had piled up higher mountains of debts and destroyed over a trillion of dollars in wealth. Every nation on earth had paid its part. Another war was in the making with an entirely new alignment of fighting forces.

"In spite of all this destruction, the capacity of humanity to start over again, was apparent. New buildings, new types of ships, new methods of railroading, new means of communication, new methods of air control, were being hurled at us to the point of confusion. But all this did not spell progress. Crime was on the increase. There was only a theoretical regard for human life. While population was increasing in numbers it was decreasing in happiness. It was a topsy-turvy world in which we lived.

"Every attempt to make people considerate of others was ridiculed. Selfishness was rampant. Every day a new scientific nostrum was offered to take the place of those that had been foisted upon

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

us previously and which had utterly failed in practice.

"Propaganda ran through everything. We had been taught to hate everything German in our youth. Then we were told that this had been merely war-talk. This prepared us to love Germany in our next war, as we were lined up with them as our co-belligerents. We were just recovering from it, when this great natural cataclysm came on. I admit that it looks as if it was a direct manifestation of some supreme mind, chastening humanity for its wickedness, but of course, such an interpretation is purely superficial.

"As my daughter phrased it, humanity is merely an incidental part of the eternal plan of the universe. Nothing but unlimited egotism can place human beings above other manifestations. Maybe this egotism is part of the plan of Nature. If so, we can go ahead along that line."

He smiled. Then he continued, more seriously.

"I see, from today, a complete change in the needs of humanity. Our problems are almost reversed. We have no need to struggle for wealth, as such. All that humanity will need in manufactured goods for the next quarter century, is already waiting for us. In certain lines that is not so, but in other lines it goes far beyond that. We have enough iron, steel, automotive equipment,

BLIND

and many other products to last for fully a half century. In foods we have flour, certain canned goods and other things to take care of the world's needs for many years to come without giving the matter any thought whatever. It would seem as though our most important problem is to learn to adjust ourselves to using the things we have and not become restless with experimentation.

"For generations, we have seen the philosophers trying to get humanity to adopt a peaceful and calm outlook upon life. Always came the cry of more time for spiritual and mental enjoyment. Then the scientists furnished us with more and newer things ostensibly designed to give us ease but instead of relief from labor we found ourselves so surfeited that we became slaves to the very things designed to make us free.

"We drew farther and farther away from simple, natural things and entered into the hideous complexities of a man-made world. Our foods became denatured. Our communications became mechanical. Our entire methods of locomotion were mechanical. Most people were becoming incapable of walking. Most brains were becoming unable to think. Individualism was dying. Everything was mass conception. A few men like yourself retained your mental independence. A few inventive geniuses stood out. A few writers re-

AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

fused to give up their souls. But slowly and surely humanity was headed for the madhouse of mass-monotony, mass-stupidity, mass-thinking and eventually mass-insanity.

"Now it is all changed. We were blind. The physical blindness that came to us for three weeks and that nearly wiped humanity from the face of the earth was no more awful than the soul-blindness that was consuming us. Now we can see with our eyes. I tell you, MacKenzie, as one man to another, I honestly believe that if we avail ourselves of the lesson that this great tragedy should teach us we may preserve to future generations a civilization so far greater in human possibilities than any hitherto conceived as will stagger the imagination.

"We have in our keeping the future of mankind. If we violate our trust, I fear that the generations which follow us will live in a world that will make Dante's *Inferno* look like a paradise. The very wealth that lies at our hands will destroy us if we do not open the eyes of men to the needs of their souls. Nature has given us back our physical sight. We must work to restore our spiritual sight. . . . Failing that, humanity is doomed."

He was striving for words. I could see that he was beginning to repeat his phrases. He stopped as though his own marvelous mind was searching

BLIND

for the truth that he was hoping to expound. He put his hand to his head and as he did so his daughter rushed over to him and put her strong young arms around him.

Helen and I stepped over and stood for a minute or two. We said, "Good-bye," quietly, and left them together. Then we walked to our own rooms, neither of us feeling inclined to say a word.

CHAPTER XVII

Two Months After Sight Returned

I FEEL that it would be an imposition upon your patience for me to dwell upon matters that other writers will elaborate upon. My sole object in this rather sketchy history is to give you an impressionistic picture. As the results of the first national convention in New York are a matter of official record, it is not necessary for me to go all over it. I assure you that I was personally more than satisfied with our progress. The fact that we drafted several amendments to the Federal Constitution instead of drafting a new instrument entirely was not a contribution to sentiment. As each suggestion was considered in committee, it was strange to see how satisfactorily the Constitution as a workable instrument lent itself even to our radical, new conditions.

The complete abolition of the electoral college method of choosing a president and the selection by direct vote of the people was my own idea and I am glad to say that it was adopted by the states inside of three months. Just as soon as our national convention in New York concluded, most of

BLIND

the states called conventions and put their respective political units into shape.

I am not going to tell you the story of our monetary system as it has been done far better than I could even hope to tell it in Professor Allendale's masterful treatise "The American Gold Standard." For about two years, things were about as complicated in finance as one might imagine. Many foolish people began hoarding gold in the theory that it would ultimately be valuable as money. The fact that for several months we kept strictly to the quota of "community service" in most of the states and that the routine of the people to working for the general good became so thoroughly established as to make it a habit, kept us from worrying over money.

Although many of my friends urged me to run for President of the United States at a special election held in December to fill out the unexpired term until 1953, I refused to allow my name to go before the conventions of any of the parties. As you know, the earnest desire to expedite matters finally resulted in the unanimous nomination of Randolph Barclay, of Illinois, who had done such a marvelous job in bringing the city of Chicago back to sanity. Unknown to the people at the time of the tragedy, he had set himself the task of leading the survivors of the blindness into a sem-

TWO MONTHS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

blance of order and had so succeeded during the first two months that the news had traveled all over the country. I was more than pleased at his selection for President. I mention it here to offset some of the stupid rumors that even then were creeping into our political life. Randolph Barclay was a man so great in soul that no thinking man could be jealous of him. The suggestion was so distasteful to me that I told my wife I would never discuss it with anyone.

One event came up that was so personal that I decided not to make it public. At first, I was induced to give it full publicity, but after considerable thought I made up my mind to keep it a profound secret. You are getting the true story for the first time, as you read this.

It occurred in the Mayor's Executive Department on the third floor of the Plaza Hotel on the night of Monday, October 23d. Sight had now been back in the world for two months. Acting along the lines we had adopted in New York City and which had been explained to the country through our temporary broadcasting stations, nearly every community was functioning on the solid basis of fundamentals.

Our effort was to see that people had plenty of good food, fresh vegetables, clean milk, medical attention, fresh air and that nobody was allowed

BLIND

to loaf. Fully one-half of the entire population was on the sick list. This meant that at least one-half of the remainder was taking care of those who were unable to care for themselves.

This meant that practically three-quarters of the people were either sick or taking care of the sick. This left only a fourth of the population to look after the food supplies and the countless other duties that were constantly cropping up as we began to see an orderly process coming into our affairs.

One case of insubordination had come to my attention, a few days before the event of which I am writing. A man apparently in the best of health, but with a strange mental complex, was located by one of my survey men, asleep in the afternoon, in a magnificent home on Park Avenue. When asked what he was doing for the community and to show his "service card" for the previous week, he had made some insulting remark and told my official to "go to hell!"

With the help of another survey man, he was finally brought before me for consideration.

"What is your name, my friend?" I asked him.

"None of your damn business," he answered, "and I'm not your friend."

"Well!" I replied, hoping to get his mind straightened out, "I'm sorry that you take such a

TWO MONTHS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

view of things. I thought that every man in the world had been through enough trouble to have a friendly feeling for everybody."

"Cut out all that bunk," he said. "I am just as much entitled to my opinion as you are. I didn't need your help to get over my blindness. I lived all my life in poverty. Nobody ever gave me anything. I fought in the last war when such people as you stayed at home. I have been ordered around by other people and forced to do things that I didn't want to do ever since the day I was born.

"I don't see any reason for working and I am not going to work. All this food and stuff lying around loose is just as much mine as it is yours. I worked for forty years creating wealth for other people and never had anything for myself but poverty and misery and heartaches. Men without any education, men who had no decent concepts of life, men who stole and cheated and never gave anything back to anybody, lived in luxury, and I just managed to keep alive. I'm sick of it, I tell you. I've made up my mind I won't work for you or anybody else."

In spite of his queer philosophy, I felt in sympathy with him. I could see that he was one of the millions of men of education who had been victims of the so-called civilization that I, myself, had

BLIND

criticized far more severely than he was now doing.

"To a great extent, your conduct is thoroughly justified," I said to him. "For every thought you have expressed, I have expressed thousands. I wrote for a small audience. Some of my earlier works were suppressed entirely or so ridiculed that they did not sell. I, too, know what it means to be poor and to work without much reward. But I feel that things have completely changed. If I were to tell you that every man and woman in New York is either working or sick, would you be willing to go to work like the rest of us?"

I could see that he was thinking, deeply.

"What will I get out of it except a living?" he asked me, as if trying to strike some sort of bargain.

"That is a question that I can't answer," I told him. "I will do my best, however, to meet the question."

He leaned over the table in front of which he was standing.

"For a few years, I doubt if money is going to be a part of our scheme of life. I doubt if it will be the real standard of exchange. Eventually, it is sure to come back. Men will begin to set up false standards again. Wealth will begin to flow into the hands of the few. But today we are all equal

TWO MONTHS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

except for the regard that our fellow-men may have for us. Even in the old days I seemed to be more anxious to have the admiration of my friends than a large fortune. You may not believe it, but I always tried to write things that were good rather than things that would sell. During the terrible five decadent years just after 1940 when it seemed as though every literary man in America was trying to reach the lowest possible depths of shocking pruriency, I refused to lower my standards. It cost me thousands of dollars but it kept my self-respect."

He was listening intently. Both of us had forgotten that we had a small audience. I went on, quietly.

"So you see, you were not the only one who was out of touch with the man-made chaos that ignorant people called 'civilization.'

"Now we are in a new era. Humanity has been chastized by Nature's own hand. I do not think it was a visitation from God any more than any other natural happening. It was just incidental so far as humanity is involved. It might have happened a billion years ago when there wasn't a human being on the earth. We were here when the blindness came. Somehow we lived through it.

"The question you asked was what would you get except a bare living, if you went to work like

BLIND

the rest of us. I only know what I am getting. In addition to eating and having a place to sleep at night, I am getting the great satisfaction of seeing men and women coming back to their senses, of seeing little children at play, of seeing other men and women singing at their work and of seeing a dead world coming back to life, a dead civilization taking on the form of a newer civilization that will adopt a new standard for humanity.

"In other words, the thing that you and I worked for, so hopelessly, is now here. Won't you do your part to keep it intact? Won't you do as much for a hopeful world as you did for a hopeless one?"

His eyes were staring at me so hard that it seemed as though there was a glaze over them. I could see that he was thinking as deeply as a man of his mentality could be expected.

"I am just beginning to see," he said, slowly. "I want you to forgive me for causing you any trouble. What a fool I was. All those agonizing days while I was blind, I prayed to God to give me back my sight. And when He gave it back to me I didn't appreciate it."

His voice was trembling with emotion. He seemed to be in the throes of a great spiritual awakening.

"Always when I talked to God, I knew I was

TWO MONTHS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

in touch with some mysterious force far above the power of man. But I would keep forgetting it. Now I can see. I can see that there is nothing else a man should ever ask for, on this earth, except the joy of doing something for somebody else. There can't be any higher reward than knowing you have done your best. Am I right?"

He asked the question, eagerly, as though he wanted me to answer some sort of a prayer.

"You are right, my friend," I said to him.

"Thanks for calling me 'friend,' " he said. "I'll be on hand when the bell rings in the morning."

I have given you the high spots of this little incident because it served as a sort of forerunner to another incident a few days later.

It had been a day of terrible discouragements. In spite of the apparent willingness of everybody in New York to work unselfishly, the death toll was very heavy and there were evidences that our medical staff was near the breaking point.

How those trained men kept at their jobs will always be one of the high-water marks of courage in the annals of human effort. There were so few doctors and skilled nurses and so many scores of thousands of helpless people that the whole situation seemed out of all proportion.

We were faced also with the care of hundreds of babies now coming into the world, most of

BLIND

whom were to be fatherless because so few families had remained together during the three weeks of blackness. All day, I had been in constant touch with the various men and women who had tried to act as superintendents of various hospital units. We were trying to work out a progressive plan to educate as many young women and men as possible to take up nursing as temporary work.

Helen, as usual, was in the thick of the turmoil, lending her matchless charm to every seeming trouble and putting life and hope into workers and sick alike.

A report from the East River front where a gang of men had been working under very trying circumstances to clear the docks so that shipping might be renewed was very encouraging. At nine o'clock, I was sitting in the Mayor's private office. A young chap who liked to call himself my secretary was with me. Dr. Cushman, the eminent surgeon whose fees had run as high as \$10,000 in many instances, up to two months before, came into the room.

"Don't get up, Mr. Mayor," he said, as I started to rise.

"Thanks, Doctor," I answered. "How is the Cushman unit getting along?"

"Wonderful!" he replied, sitting down in a big easy chair. "Between seven o'clock this morning

TWO MONTHS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

and eight o'clock tonight, I did exactly forty operations."

"My God! Doctor, I don't see how you stand it. You must be dead on your feet."

He smiled, wearily.

"Somebody must do it, Mr. Mayor. We can't let amateurs cut into human beings. I've got to keep going. Tomorrow is another big day, they tell me. I've got a dozen fine young boys from the medical schools weeding them out for me. If the anesthetics hold out and I can continue to sleep the way I did last night, we will pull through."

He stood up as if to go.

"I don't know how I can thank you, Doctor."

"Forget it, MacKenzie," he answered.

"A hundred years from now, when historians are looking at the pictures of some of the things we did around here, they may point to a picture of the Cushman Emergency Unit and say, 'There's the place where Dr. Ralph Cushman worked harder for the glory of his profession than he ever worked for money in all his selfish life before.'"

"Don't you dare to speak of yourself in any such way, Doctor," I said, jumping to my feet. "You know you were a credit to medicine, one of the really great surgeons of our day. I won't let you stand here and abuse yourself."

BLIND

He was smiling back at me. His powerful right hand grasped mine; the same hand that could balance a drop of congealing blood on the end of a knife and hold it so steady for a minute of time that an examiner with a microscope couldn't see the tremor of a thousandth of an inch. Just to feel that dynamic hand seemed to give me strength.

It was at this moment that a loud knock sounded on the door. I had never locked the door during the time I had been using it, so I shouted, "Come in!" thinking it might be somebody looking for advice. Everything was still in an informal sort of state.

The door swung open and three of the most powerful and terrible looking men I had ever seen strode into the room. Their faces were covered with heavy beards, too thick and too long to have been grown since the tragedy.

"Good evening, gentlemen," I said. "Won't you sit down?"

"No!" One of them shouted out the word as though it was a challenge to my authority. I immediately figured that he was to be the spokesman.

"Very well!" I said, as pleasantly as I could, all the time thinking of the case of my obstreperous visitor of a few days back. "What can I do for you?"

TWO MONTHS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

"You are the Mayor of New York?" The man with the heavy voice put the question.

"I am," I replied.

"Well, that's all over. We don't want any Mayor. We want a Dictator and we are here to take charge." He looked at his two companions for approval and they both nodded their heads.

"But suppose the people don't like the idea?" I asked.

"To hell with the people. They don't know what they want. They elect one man one year with a big majority and the next year they elect somebody else in his place. They never get what they want. They have been electing men and kicking them out for a hundred years in America and the government got worse and worse. The man on the job was never sure of his place so he gave the people an administration without character. He tried to please everybody and of course he fell down on his job. The people want to be ruled. They might talk against a Dictator but the minute a Dictatorship is declared, the people who yelled the loudest against it will be the first to shout its praises and try to stand in with the new government. They always did, even in America. You never saw the bankers fighting the government. They tried to elect their own man and if they failed they immediately began to get their claws

BLIND

onto the men they had opposed. The people have never got a square deal."

He was a fluent speaker and evidently one who had not been a stranger to Union Square and the outdoor radical forums. He paused as if he expected me to say something.

"Well! I certainly agree that there is a great deal of truth in what you say. The question is what are we going to do about it?"

He reached into his pocket and drew out a big service pistol. It was the only gun of any nature I had seen since sight had returned. None of our survey men carried guns or billies or anything of that nature.

Glaring at me as though I had done him some mortal injury, my visitor pointed his murderous gun at me and began to walk across the room.

"I'm going to kill you, MacKenzie," he said. "I told my crowd that I would kill you and become Dictator."

His earnestness was so compelling that I watched him fascinated. So engrossed was he in his intentions that he paid no attention to Dr. Cushman. Maybe he thought that a man of Cushman's bearing would not participate in an argument of this kind.

Suddenly, so swiftly that I didn't know what had happened until it was all over, my would-be

TWO MONTHS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

assassin let out one of the most blood-curdling cries of pain I had ever heard. At the same time he dropped his gun onto the thick carpet and tried frantically to break away from Dr. Cushman who was holding his massive right arm in a grip of steel, just above the elbow.

"Let me go!" he shouted. "You're killing me."

But instead of letting go, the doctor seemed to take a sadistic delight in keeping his vise-like fingers on some sensitive nerve. The shouts continued. One of his companions started to say something to add to the dispute. But before he could frame the words, Dr. Cushman gave an extra squeeze and the giant spokesman against Democracy crumpled up in a heap on the floor. His two companions were so astounded that they stood and gaped at him. Dr. Cushman looked at me, with a smile on his handsome face. Even the ravages of hardship and constant work had not interfered with the distinguished look that he bore.

"Too bad he caught me when I was tired," he said, almost apologetically.

The man on the floor decided to stagger back to his feet. Without even a smile, I said to him, "Pardon me, this is Dr. Cushman, the eminent surgeon."

BLIND

The doctor held out his hand but the disgruntled dictator did not respond.

"I've heard of you," he said, sullenly. "I never thought I would meet up with you."

"These are unusual times," said the doctor, pleasantly.

We were interrupted by the entrance of Helen. A young woman was with her, dressed in a nurse's costume. She was carrying a baby wrapped up in what looked to be a magnificent costume. The newcomers into the world were being given royal raiment. They stepped across the room as though about to spring some pleasant surprise on me.

"See your young namesake, my dear," said Helen. "Isn't he just a darling?"

I looked at the mite of humanity that had evidently been ushered into the world a few days previously.

"What is his name?" I asked.

"David MacKenzie Varlitski," said my wife, proudly.

As she uttered the strange-sounding Russian family name, the leader of my three visitors jumped to the nurse's side. The other two looked up, in surprise.

"Whose baby you got there?" he shouted at the nurse.

TWO MONTHS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

"It was born to a Mrs. Helenska Varlitski, three days ago," replied the nurse.

"The mother!" he shouted. "Is she all right?"

"Of course she is all right," replied the nurse, looking at Dr. Cushman with unabashed admiration. "Dr. Cushman was in attendance."

"It's my kid!" he yelled, frantically, at his two friends. "I thought she was dead and the baby and everything."

We were all looking at him as though he had suddenly gone crazy. Then it dawned upon us that the law of reasonable coincidence had been strained away beyond the point of credence. Out of all the families in New York in similar circumstances, here was the father of the only child who had been brought to the Mayor's office and, entirely unknown to the father, the child was to carry through life the name of the man the father would have assassinated had it not been for the man who had delivered the child into the world.

The incident was so charged with the miraculous, so evidently staged by the stage director of the infinite universe that I felt as if I were in the presence of Him who had performed miracles on earth, twenty centuries ago.

The nurse was holding the sleeping infant so that the father could look at the little wrinkled

BLIND

red face. Dr. Cushman stepped over and patted the father on the back.

"Fine boy, Mr. Varlitski," he said. He turned to the nurse. "Was that the Cæsarian on the third floor?"

"Yes, Doctor, the Russian woman whose husband was lost."

Varlitski was listening intently.

"I think I remember now. Things were coming so fast this week, I didn't have much chance to get acquainted with the patients. How is she doing?"

"Fine, Doctor. She is very brave. She wants to get up and go to work, but we are holding her back for a few more days."

"Doctor, can I ask you a question?" said Varlitski.

"Sure," replied Cushman.

"Do you mean to tell me that you operated on my wife for nothing?"

"Certainly. Nobody is getting paid for doing anything today."

The doctor's answer seemed to have a strange effect on him. He put his hands to his eyes as if seeking for a solution to so strange a doctrine. We all watched him, trying to show the proper sympathy. Then he turned to his two companions.

"Go back to the headquarters," he said, slowly, "and tell them I am going to work for Mayor

TWO MONTHS AFTER SIGHT RETURNED

MacKenzie anywhere he wants me." His eyes were filling with tears.

"Doctor," he said, "can I go back with the nurse and see my boy's mother?"

"Certainly!" answered Dr. Cushman. "I think it will help her more than a dozen visits from a doctor."

The nurse started for the door. The big Russian followed after her. He was so taken up with his new-born baby that he forgot to say good-bye to Mrs. MacKenzie or me and he left his big revolver lying on the thick carpet.

Dr. Cushman went over and picked it up. Helen saw the deadly looking weapon and turned to me, enquiringly. My smile did not disarm her fears.

"David?" she said, throwing her arms around me, and looking up into my eyes. "Tell me! What happened."

"Nothing strange, my dear. Just the old life-saver, Dr. Cushman, doing some extra home work." I held her closely and patted her shoulder reassuringly.

"I shall never know how to thank you, Doctor," I said.

"Forget it, MacKenzie!" he said. "The world can't spare you, yet. And for the life of me," he continued, as a quizzical smile played around his aristocratic mouth, "maybe the world needs Var-

BLIND

litski, also. Nothing but sudden impulse kept me from throwing him through that window and it is a good forty-foot drop."

He walked slowly to the door. For this man who had been one of the city's great social lions just a few weeks before there was only a long night of loneliness ahead and a tomorrow filled with work that would tax the strength of a dozen giants.

"Good night, Mrs. MacKenzie," he said, "and you, Mr. Mayor."

As he looked at us, I knew he must be thinking of his own beautiful wife and two young sons who had not survived the tragedy. As he closed the door, Helen looked at me and said, almost reverently:

"He appears to be a man living with a broken heart. Do you know, David, there are times when I seem to think it is almost idolatrous for me to be so radiantly happy when there is so much suffering in the world."

I took her into my arms and held her tightly. I could think of no words to answer her questioning. On the desk I saw the big revolver that Varlitski had brought along as the purchase price of Dictatorship. The random thought kept running through my mind: "What right has man to imagine that he has anything to do with his own destiny?"

CHAPTER XVIII

The World Progresses Slowly

IT may sound almost untruthful to say that the time through which the world was now passing was one of almost deadening routine. Looking back as you will, through the eyes of a century, I can imagine you saying to yourself: "I wish I had been there in those days, with unlimited wealth on every hand and only a few important problems to face. Humanity's troubles are trivial if there is money or wealth enough to meet them."

Probably in your world of the twenty-first century, with a century of rehabilitation behind you, your viewpoint may seem justified. But suppose I am able, today, to tell you that you in your time will not be really handling your social problems as well as we of today are handling ours? Suppose I can honestly look ahead for the next hundred years and justly criticize the world of that time for its utter incapacity to distribute happiness among all the people, will it not occur to you, as a thinking person, that maybe we did fairly well under the terrible circumstances that confronted us in the months and years that followed after the world's blindness?

BLIND

At least we progressed, even though it was slowly. We took no backward steps. Everybody worked who had strength enough to stay out of the hospital. Everybody took an interest in the general welfare. When the people voted or held community meetings or expressed themselves on any matter of public moment, the records will show that practically everybody took part. The zeal shown in general public welfare was never higher in American history than during our reconstruction period, following the blindness.

When you consider that before the tragedy there were fully a hundred million people in our country living off the work of the other sixty million of our population you will realize the vicious line-up that had developed in our economic and industrial life. Please don't understand that all these hundred million were living in luxury. I mean that they were the ratio of our population who were either out of employment and a charge upon the general welfare or were possessed of wealth in sufficient quantity to do nothing except live on their income. Needless to say most of them were living in abject poverty in a land of enormous wealth.

Now we were faced with a complete reversal of all our former difficulties. There was far more work to be done than there were people to do it.

THE WORLD PROGRESSES SLOWLY

All of the adjustments of family life so eloquently taken care of by Nature's own biological urge in years past had suddenly been eliminated.

The striking proportion of males to females of the human species that had come down through the ages almost on an even basis, in spite of man-made destruction of the young males in devastating wars, seemed to hold constant. Without a complete census, I judged that we had just about as many men and boys in New York as we had women and girls. But the families were not intact. The question of repopulating the world was one that we must face and face without fear.

A proper regard for the future of humanity, one in which healthy fathers and mothers might produce a race of healthy children, had always occupied the attention of a few philosophers, but very little advancement had taken place. It was a hit-or-miss scheme like most of men's plans.

We had gone along, leaving this most important matter of development entirely in the keeping of natural attraction. Maybe if governments had tried to regulate the matter, we might have made even a worse mess of it than it was. The question is debatable.

With hundreds of thousands of men and women of all ages and all sorts of mental and physical conditions facing a future without any of the

BLIND

stabilizing influence of family life so deep-rooted in our national character it is no wonder that some of our leading men were worried. Without giving undue prominence to a condition that might easily have become one of moral degeneracy, I early called upon all of the clergymen who had survived the disaster to set about an organization of religious worship. No effort was made to compel religious observance. It was optional in every case. By having no other attraction or community interest on Sundays, it soon developed that religion was having a revival. While the same procedure did not obtain in other cities, the example set in New York had its effect.

Marriages for the first few months were referred to a Board of Examiners who looked into all the cases. If there was a hopeless disparity in ages or if there was some physical or mental objection, it was explained to the contracting parties. Out of the first thousand requests that came before the Board it was necessary to refuse about two hundred and fifty couples.

There was very little rebellion against the decisions. When matters were explained, the Board generally received the thanks of the party who would have been injured by the marriage.

In cases where a very young girl seemed willing to marry a man much older than herself, the

THE WORLD PROGRESSES SLOWLY

Board felt in duty bound to refuse its sanction. When the reasons were given and the future life of the girl was pointed out, she generally took things philosophically. Old women, with designs upon young men entirely unadapted to them as possible husbands, were given little consideration by the Board. In the matter of disease, the Board was rigid in its refusals. Humanity had troubles enough, without going ahead, deliberately inviting more, through hopeless marriages, was the way the Board viewed its work.

If the biologic drive that came to the people of America immediately after the great tragedy had been allowed to go ahead unregulated for the first two years, it is my honest opinion that we would have produced as many imbeciles as we did normal people. By imposing reasonable restraints and proper conditions in the marriage relationships, we not only dignified family life and put it on a high plane mentally, but we insured an incoming generation of healthy, sane children.

Please do not feel that I am personally claiming credit for all of the reforms that were urged upon the people. I made a special effort to invite suggestions from every possible source. As the mad scramble for wealth was no longer the dominating urge of humanity, the people seemed anxious to make their contribution to the general good. It

BLIND

was just as selfish, viewed from one angle, but it was a community selfishness. Seldom did I come into contact with a man or woman who was inordinately anxious to do the things that had motivated the lives of so large a proportion of the people, in other days.

The entire attitude of the people toward life itself had changed. This was only natural. Nobody could look ahead and see himself as a victim of unemployment. Nobody could see himself standing in a bread line or sleeping on a park bench waiting for a cheerless dawn. Work in endless quantity, vast programs that would add to human comforts could be seen even by those most lacking in vision. Patiently we applied ourselves to keeping our minds clear, our bodies sound and the general economic plan a progressive one. In spite of the apparent hopelessness of our plight, it was definitely determined at all of the conferences in which I engaged that nothing but patience and still more patience would get real results.

I remember one statement made by a Congressman from New York who had gone through the world depression that started in 1929. At a meeting held in my office to settle upon a policy involving an exchange of goods from New York City with the people up state who controlled the milk supply, he was among those present.

THE WORLD PROGRESSES SLOWLY

"Mr. Mayor," he suggested, "I would like to give you the benefit of my experience in Congress, twenty years ago. I recall that we had practically unlimited wealth, but there was no underlying incentive to keep people employed. The people changed their administration on the assumption that any change would be an improvement.

"Although I was a Democrat and just as anxious as anybody in Congress to have my party successful, I soon became convinced that the mere passing of laws, the issuing of executive proclamations, and drastic proposals involving billions of dollars in governmental expenditures would not end the depression. When I said so, one morning, in a debate on the monetary situation, almost two years after we had tried every theoretical plan that could be suggested, I was named on the floor of the House as a traitor to my party."

"I recall your speech, Congressman," I said. "In fact, I quoted it in my text-book on 'Economic Recovery.' "

"Well!" he said, "you will remember that my main point was that there were times in the lives of men and of nations when the age-old virtue of patience was the only real need and the equally old law of a reasonable supply to fill an intelligent demand was the only law that would ever get us out of our economic morass."

BLIND

"Almost word for word, as I remember it," I answered. "And the ultimate events proved your soundness of observation."

"Surely," he said. "The neglected market in automobiles suddenly began to wake up with new models that caught the public fancy. There were improvements in the television field that made the old radios obsolete. There was a change in the style of plays on the stage and an immediate call for new screen productions. The aviation field widened its scope with startling safety devices and controls that multiplied the business in the air by ten, almost over night.

"And simply because all these things took place as a logical consequence of the urge of people to buy something because they couldn't resist its appeal and to enthuse over the very optimism of money in circulation, the folks who had advocated the passage of laws that had never functioned whatever, were given credit for having brought the things about."

"How do you apply your analogy to our present situation?" I asked.

"Simply this," he replied. "Except in the case of those who are in bad shape physically, there isn't any hurry. Let us take things easy. Let us be patient. So far as I can see the day of the millionaire is over. Everybody seems to be on an equal

THE WORLD PROGRESSES SLOWLY

footing. All my life I have been hearing about proper use of one's spare time. But the wealthier men became, the less time they had for themselves. The only really cultured class in America up to August 1st were those out of work. They filled our libraries, our museums and listened to the free concerts.

"There was more discussion of literature, art, music and economics on the benches in Bryant Park than there was around the tables of the University and Union League clubs.

"I suggest taking our time and taking advantage of conditions. I advocate the education of all our people, men, women and children. I would like to be appointed Chairman of the Board of Education to inaugurate a cultural system of applied intelligence."

That was the reason for the new system of universal education that we adopted in New York and which was immediately taken up not only in America but in most of the nations of the world.

To Honorable Frederick Parker Barnes of New York should be given fully as much credit for the educational system that you of the twenty-first century have inherited as we of the twentieth century gave to Horace Mann for the free public school system that he fathered in the early days of the republic.

CHAPTER XIX

The United States of the World

THE first suggestion that it was about time the world should function as a great community of civilized beings working for the good of all rather than as disintegrated groups hemmed in by arbitrary geographical boundaries, actuated by jealousy and exaggerated nationalism, came from an economic conference held in New York. Tariffs, racial egotism, out-worn traditions and perverted ideas of sound statesmanship had kept the political minds of people far apart, while the inventive skill of men was striving to eliminate physical distance and destroy national boundary lines.

It was early in December of 1950 that we shipped a full boat-load of radio sets to England. There were something like forty thousand sets, all so complete that they required nothing whatever to make them operate except turning the dial. It was a gesture of good will, made for the ultimate purpose of putting all the people of the world into daily communication with each other. The Lord Mayor of London accepted them most graciously and, in return, sent us a cargo of the

THE UNITED STATES OF THE WORLD

finest English woolens. Whether we ever used them or not, I don't recall. Our storehouses were so glutted with fabricated clothings of every nature that it looked as though we could never use them. The need for display in clothing was gone, as our social contacts were simple.

With international trade thus inaugurated on a free basis of exchange, we soon found that there were many things of a practical nature that could be sent from one country to another. Of course, the big work was at home, but the old spirit of adventure seemed to prompt these incursions into foreign fields.

Early in May of 1951, after weeks of radio invitations, we held an international conference in New York. Representatives came from nearly every nation on earth. President Barclay flew over from Washington to open the convention. Most of the delegates were total strangers to international affairs. The long list of men and women who had dominated the meetings of the League of Nations was gone. A new list was in evidence, new faces, new ideas, new people to meet new problems. While it was called for an economic exchange of ideas and to welcome suggestions toward a rehabilitation of the world, it finally developed into the most momentous meeting ever held in human history.

BLIND

Several people have been given credit for originating the idea of a United States of the World. I do not wish to take away from any man or woman credit that may be due them. To my mind, the plan was a gradual growth. When men and women from England, France, Germany, Russia, China, Japan, Brazil and scores of smaller countries have talked for three days, without mentioning battleships, fighting planes, lethal gas or submarines and discussed instead opportunities to be of service to each other, all of them freely offering their surplus goods of every nature to the common good of humanity, it seems but natural that a perfected plan of international sanity should finally come into the minds of the delegates. The first man to use the phrase at this meeting, although it had been used countless times before by writers on international relations, was Honorable Jean Bonheur, of France. He spoke English exquisitely and took a delight in conference. One afternoon, after a paper had been read by one of the delegates from India, telling how that great country had fought its way back to a semblance of normal thought, Monsieur Bonheur arose to comment favorably on the intelligence of the work, as outlined.

President Barclay had remained in New York and was presiding over the body. One of the gor-

THE UNITED STATES OF THE WORLD

geous assembly rooms of the Plaza had been put into shape for the meeting. Some of my helpers who specialized on interior decoration had outdone themselves in their artistic efforts. The meeting was being broadcast to the whole world, thanks to the genius of some of our electrical experts.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the conference," said Bonheur, with an engaging smile, "we have been here for three delightful days. We have discussed many matters, most of them of a material nature. The distribution of the wealth of the world, without barriers of any kind and on a mutually satisfactory basis seems destined to go ahead in a most satisfactory way because of our calm deliberations.

"But as I sat here and saw the way in which the American people were meeting their own problem and at the same time offering to help out the entire world, without any hope of reward except a more cordial friendship between nations, the thought occurred to me that we should look deep into the American conscience and see if there is not something there that all the world should emulate."

He paused to gain the close attention of everybody. But he needn't have hesitated. Every delegate was listening with the utmost concentration.

"I think I have found it," he continued. "In the word 'United' I think there is a beautiful thought. When people are united in a common purpose

BLIND

all thoughts of jealousy are eliminated. Here in America, there does not seem to be any jealousy between the states. The smallest state is not jealous of the largest. Each state is proud of the fact that it forms one of the needed parts to make up the entire nation.

"I propose, therefore, that we set up, at the earliest possible time, a United States of the World, fashioned after the United States of America, with two branches of Congress, a World Court to be selected by the majority vote of the Congresses and a president, vice-president and advisory council to be selected by popular vote."

At this point he was interrupted by applause.

"I can see in this plan," he continued, "no more armies, no more navies, no more war debt, no more wasteful destruction of life and morale, no more interference with an enduring peace on earth."

There is the simple fact of the whole matter. When my name was first suggested as the first President of the United States of the World, I made the counter suggestion that Honorable Jean Bonheur be named, but he positively declined and I finally accepted. My election the following month brings me up to the address that I delivered on July 4th in London, at the first meeting of the new World Union.

CHAPTER XX

Let There Be Light!

IT was on a glorious Sunday morning, June 24, 1951, that David Glenn MacKenzie, Jr., was born. Three days before that time, I had been selected practically unanimously as first President of the United States of the World. You may think it strange, but the honor that had so wonderfully come to me, in many ways the highest that had ever been conferred by the world upon any man, made little impression upon me, at the moment. What is honor or glory at a time when a man is waiting the advent of his first born? How trivial it all seemed, as I counted the hours when I could be told that my beautiful wife had met the great crisis of maternity.

All the turmoil of elections and speeches and radio talks and electioneering had been eliminated. Although the people all over the world went to the polls and voted for the various candidates who were to be the first officials chosen in a plan to give representative government to all the nations on earth, it was done quietly and with a dignity to conform with the supreme purpose behind it.

BLIND

Helen took far more interest in the election than I did. Dr. Cushman was in constant attendance and seemed pleased that she could keep her mind upon world affairs and away from her own personal matters. The result of the election, so far as my own candidacy was concerned, was known in advance. It required merely the official marks of the voters, acting in accordance with the regular rules of their various countries. With this in her mind and with the radio bringing into our home and the Mayor's office in New York, endless streams of congratulatory air-grams from every corner of the globe, Helen smiled a brave goodbye as I left her in care of Dr. Cushman and two of his nurses at the Cushman Unit.

After what seemed an eternity of time, but actually two hours later, the Doctor came over to me and said: "It's a boy, Mr. President, and everything is perfect."

With this off my mind, I immediately set about making plans to start the great international political machine to work. By close figuring, I estimated that I could leave New York by plane on July 1st and arrive in London the following morning so that I might prepare the opening of the new World Congress. It was my intention to have the inauguration ceremonies as simple as possible and then call the Congress together for

LET THERE BE LIGHT

the purpose of establishing its official functions and return at once to New York.

There were many official matters that had to be settled in New York, but the enthusiasm of everybody made it easy for me to get things done. The only difficulty that confronted us was in keeping people who were anxious to work fully supplied with a continual incentive to keep active. The morale of everybody was marvelous.

Promptly according to schedule, after bidding "good-bye" to Helen and her baby, I left for London over the northern air route and arrived on July 2d. There was a sentimental reason in my mind for opening the World Congress on July 4th. As an American, I had always regarded the 4th of July as one of the most significant days of human history. I felt that its true meaning would be of inestimable value if we could attach it to the new independence of the world. I had no expectation of satisfying the hopes of everybody. I did, however, hope that I might strike a note of sincerity in my inaugural address, which was also to be my opening address to the Congress. Everything went according to plans. The House of Parliament was turned over to us for the official proceedings and it was in that historic setting that the new Prime Minister of England invited me to

BLIND

take the oath of office as the first President of the United States of the World.

With the world listening in, I made my address. I am asking my publisher of one hundred years hence to close my story on the world tragedy by printing my address, without deletion.

Address of

DAVID GLENN MACKENZIE

First President of the United States of the World

Delivered in the

HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT, LONDON, ENGLAND

WEDNESDAY, JULY 4, 1951

My fellow citizens of the world. It is with the most profound appreciation of the great honor that you have conferred upon me that I accept the tremendous responsibility which my office as first President of the United States of the World imposes. Somehow or other, now that I have taken the oath to serve you, I do not feel over-burdened in any way. I feel a sort of spiritual exhaltation that seems to lift me from ordinary affairs. I seem to regard myself as a mere detached instrument to carry out your wishes.

I shall not attempt to review again the terrible tragedy that came to us, eleven months ago. It is so thoroughly a part of each one of us that it requires no elucidation. I feel that when humanity lost its physical sight it was a manifestation of Nature herself calling attention to the sad fact that for many years we had been living in a world

LET THERE BE LIGHT

in which our spiritual eyes were almost totally blind.

For the first time in all the history of mankind we are now in absolute accord with each other and all working to a common and helpful purpose. I do not know how far we should go in an endeavor to lay down drastic rules for generations yet to come. I am quite convinced, as I review history, that one of humanity's greatest mistakes has been to try to force the dead patterns of the past into the living fabric of the future.

Today, every man, woman and child on the face of the earth is equal; each to the other. I mean, of course, equal in wealth and in opportunity to advance himself. This condition will not last.

In many of the countries of the world those in control have already started to redistribute wealth according to the old standards.

How far they will go is a deep question. In the United States of America we have worked as rapidly as possible in an effort to make our people healthy as our first great fundamental. We have allowed other questions to drift. We have established no monetary system. We have inaugurated instead a system of "service" in which every one physically capable of working has been given his chance. We have abolished our jails because there is no need for them. This condition will not last indefinitely but it is the fact as I am talking to you today.

I especially selected July 4th as Inauguration Day because I wish to thank the world for the great honor it has paid the people of the United

BLIND

States in fashioning a world Constitution after the general political form that has served the American people for one hundred and sixty years. As it has always been the custom of the President of the United States to set forth some of the plans that he had in mind to be worked out with the legislative branch, I am going to follow that plan.

I feel that the first problem of the world is to make its people capable of living in it. People who are in poor health cannot live in proper enjoyment of the many things that life has to offer. We owe it to our fellow-men to use every effort to keep them at all times healthy according to the very highest standards. It is my intention to dwell upon health regulations at greater length in other messages to the World Congress.

In the distribution of wealth, it will be found, later, that we should have a standard medium of national and world exchange. I feel that this standard should be gold because of its rarity and because of its many known qualities in standardization. I am confident that a decimal system of coinage and money based on the American monetary system will best serve us in expediting international trade. This system is also more flexible in accounting and could well be adopted by all the nations. I feel that a decimal standard of weights and measures should also be established all over the world.

It is my opinion that every man and every woman should be regarded as a free citizen of the world and that citizenship in any country should be based upon mere residence. I would suggest the

LET THERE BE LIGHT

formulation of rules to govern the question of international citizenship so that a man or woman may not lose his right to participate in governmental matters regardless of where he may live or take up his residence.

I feel that education is even more valuable to old people who have been neglected than it is to our youth. I suggest that education be made reasonably compulsory for everybody. I have always held that the most lonesome people on earth were folks in middle life who felt that they were out of touch with the coming generations because of lack of education. One of the most serious faults of our educational systems has been the fact that most people stopped using their brains just as soon as they had gotten away from school contacts. I would not urge a drastic compulsory proposition of this nature for more than a trial period of ten years.

Trying to fasten new rules of conduct upon large groups of people often produces an irritability that defeats the intended purpose.

One reason why humanity was the most terrible failure that Nature ever produced was because we were the only living force that tried to set up laws in defiance of Nature's established rules. Nature gave man the means to think. It gave him this marvelous mental independence and capacity in good faith. At the same time, it did not take away from him any other faculties. It left him the faculty of keeping in touch with Nature. For centuries, the great philosophers tried to make men see that man's destiny was to co-operate with

BLIND

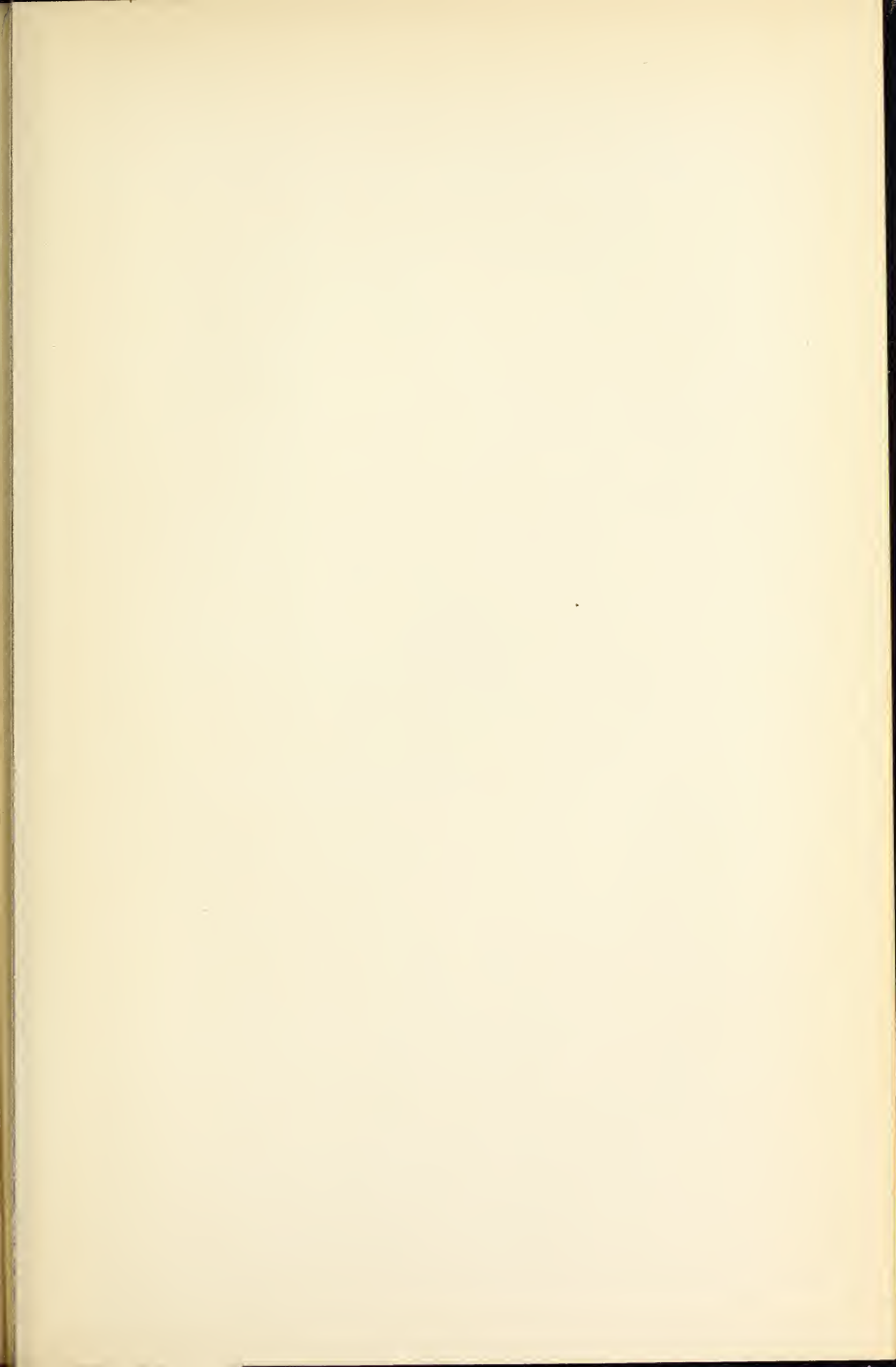
Nature, to obey her fundamental laws, to develop a sound mind in a clean body, to conserve his energy. But the advice of the philosophers fell on deaf ears. Men defied God in Nature. They allowed their unnatural appetites to destroy their bodies, their minds and their souls.

They invented vast engines to be used for human destruction. They crucified the idealism of Nature's eternal plan on the cross of a man-made scheme of international distrust. In a world filled only with things that came freely from the hand of a just God, men arrogated to themselves wealth and power and the right to destroy. They ravished the storehouses of the earth. Instead of love as the dominant force of human conduct, hatred dominated the world.

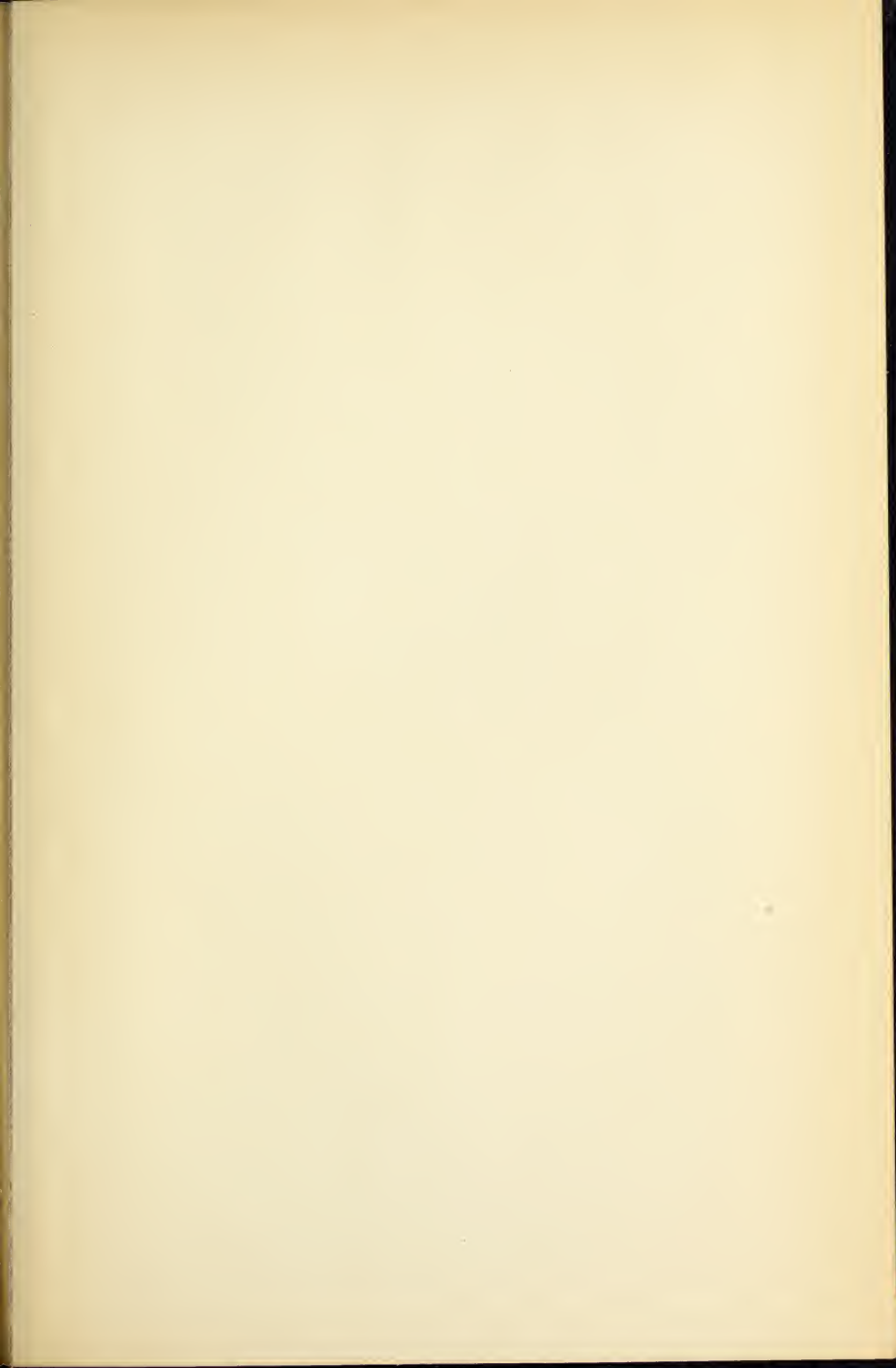
Today, I see a new world. I see the world that should have been. I see men of every race, every color, every belief, every philosophy working and thinking along the definite pathway of universal love for one another.

The world has been in darkness. The world of men has been blind to the true needs of men. When this fathomless universe first came out of the chaos of infinity, God said: "Let there be light!" So, today, to all the peoples of earth, I say to you who have just emerged out of the man-made chaos of a defeatist civilization: "Let there be light!"

—THE END—









HV2345

c.1

M

McMasters, William H.

BLIND.

Date Due			

HV2345

c.1

M

AUTHOR

McMasters, William H.

TITLE

BLIND.

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME
1/2/10	Franca Hostler
	Reference Copy

